

LETTERS
OF
NINON DE LENCLOS,
TO THE
Marquiss DE SEVIGNE.

Translated from the FRENCH.

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
VIRG. Georg. L. ii. 420.



LONDON:

Printed for D. WILSON, at Plato's Head
in the Strand. MDCCLII.

LETTERS

NON IN CLOS



Prefatory Epistle

I send you, Madam, the Letters
of the deceased Mademoiselle
Lecturer to the University of Bonn
and tho' I have the greatest submission
to your Pleasure, I cannot help owning
that it is not without Reluctance that
I have determined to send you with
this Collection, in the consideration that
it is the only Work which remains to
us of a Woman, as famous for the Su-
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Character of her Person, and who will
be in the great A. 1700.

T H E

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be sensible, how much the Advantage of being the only Possessor of this Manuscript, must increase its Value in my Eyes; wherefore I expect very great Acknowledgments for so valuable a Sacrifice. Besides, I wish that the reading of those Letters may not diminish, in some measure, the favourable Idea which you had conceived of them, and which the Abbé *de Châteauneuf* gives us of them in his Dialogue on the Music of the Ancients. He designs *Mademoiselle de Lenclos* under the Name of *Leontium*; and, in his Panegyric upon her, he does not forget her Talent in the Epistolary Way.

“ The Letters of *Leontium*, ” says he, after having found Fault with the Affectation of those of *Balsac* and *Voiture*,
 “ have

" have always equally pleased, be-
 " cause they are really Letters. Tho'
 " the Turn of them is singular, and
 " they are full of Morality, and quite
 " brilliant with Wit, yet they have no-
 " thing far-fetched. As the Morality
 " of them is always seasoned with Hu-
 " mour, and the Wit does not discover
 " itself but under the Appearance of a
 " free and natural Imagination, they
 " differ in nothing from a Conversa-
 " tion; and it is impossible not to think,
 " that when she was writing to her
 " Friends, she imagined herself to be
 " actually speaking to them."

I leave it to you, Madam, to judge,
 if what I send you answers this Cha-
 racter, and whether this Encomium be
 the Work of a prejudiced Person. The

only Favour which I dare ask of you is, that you will remember the Promise you made to me, not to communicate to any Person the Letters I intrust you with. They whose Hands they might fall into, would not perhaps readily enough excuse those Negligences, which a Woman allows herself in. And besides, in the present Age, who would be able to amuse themselves with such Kind of Reading? They would neither find in them malicious Descriptions, Obscenity, nor Irreligion. And if you believe a great many People, there is scarce any other Kind of Writing that is relished at present.

Mademoiselle de Lenclos wrote upon the Heart, of Love, and of Women. What a copious Subject! and who was
more

more able to explain it than she? With the Turn of Mind which she had, she could not see the Men, without studying and knowing them. You know as well as I, because those Authors who wrote in her Time have observed this of her, that she admitted none to her House but the best-bred Courtiers. Men of the most illustrious Talents courted her Friendship and Correspondence, and were not ashamed to profit by her Advice.

“ The * House of Mademoiselle de Lenox, the celebrated *Ninon*, was the Rendezvous of all the Polite and Witty both of the Court and Town. The most virtuous Mothers made In-

* See the Life of the Abbé Gédéon prefixed to his Miscellanies, printed in 1745.

“ tereft

" tereft for their Children, who were
 " entered into the World, to enjoy the
 " Advantage of being admitted into an
 " agreeable Society, which was looked
 " upon as the Centre of good Compa-
 " ny. The Abbé Gédoyne, needed only
 " to fhew himfelf there to be relifhed,
 " and there he acquired Friends, who
 " interefted themfelves very warmly in
 " his Reputation and Fortune."

In a word, all the Authors who have
 mentioned her, tell us, that her Turn
 of Mind was as agreeable as folid. She
 was a Philofopher, but a very amiable
 one. " She joined," fays the Abbé de
 Châteauneuf, " all the Virtues of our
 " Sex to the Charms of her own; in
 " Defpite of which, ſhe has placed her-
 " felf in the Rank of illuſtrious Men."

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The Character which *St. Evremont* gives her in one of his Letters which he wrote to her, finishes this Encomium :
He concludes with these Verses :

“ *L’indulgent & sage Nature,*

“ *A formé l’ame de Ninion,*

“ *De la volupté d’Epicure,*

“ *Et de la Vertu de Caton.*

“ Nature benevolent and wise,

“ *Ninon’s* well-temper’d Soul has
“ framed,

“ Of *Epicurus’* Taste of Joys,

“ With *Cato’s* rigid Virtue tamed.”

I shall only quote another Passage of the *Abbé de Châteauneuf*, in order to put the finishing Stroke towards giving you a just Idea of this celebrated Lady. It is that where he talks of her manner of thinking with regard to Love and Friendship.

Friendship. You will understand the Importance of this last Quotation, upon reading her Letters.

“ As the first Use,” says he, “ which
 “ she has made of her Reason, has been
 “ to free herself from vulgar Preju-
 “ dices, it is impossible to avoid more
 “ than she has done, that foolish Error
 “ of those, who under the Name of a
 “ fine Passion, would almost *exalt Love*
 “ *to a Virtue*. Love, which she has
 “ always taken for what it really is, for
 “ a Taste founded on the Senses, for a
 “ blind Passion, which supposes no Me-
 “ rit in the Object which excites it, nor
 “ even obliges it in the least to be grate-
 “ ful. In a word, for a Caprice, of
 “ which the Duration has no Depen-
 “ dence upon us, and which is subject
 “ to

“ to Disgust and Regret. What
 “ seemed to give her still a better right
 “ to treat it in this manner was, that
 “ she reserved all her Esteem and Con-
 “ fidence for Friendship, which always
 “ appeared to her a Connection the
 “ most to be regarded, and in which
 “ she never allowed herself neither
 “ to become fickle nor cold. So that she
 “ obliged her Lovers to acknowledge,
 “ that they had no Rivals which they
 “ were more afraid of than her Friends.”

Those Letters which I have sent you,
 are only an Explanation of these general
 Ideas.

I ought now to proceed regularly to
 inform you of what Anecdotes I have
 been able to discover of the Life of my
 Author; but this is a Piece of gallant
 History,

History, which is reserved for a Pen more worthy and more capable of treating it than mine. Read then, Madam; and if that which I now send you amuses you, I shall do myself the Pleasure to communicate to you what remains of these Letters. I have the Honour to be, &c.



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LETTERS

O F

NINON DE LENCLOS,

TO THE

Marquiss DE SEVIGNE.

LETTER I.

TO charge me with your Education, and the Direction of your Conduct in the new Course of Life which you are going to enter upon, is laying too heavy a Task on the Friendship I have for you. You know very well that when a Woman, who is past the prime of her Youth, seems to interest herself particularly in the Fortune of a young Man, they say that she wants to introduce him into the World ; and you are sensible how maliciously they make use of this Expression. I would not therefore ex-

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pose myself to an Insinuation of that kind; all I can do to serve you, is to be your Confident. You shall inform me of the different Situations in which you find yourself, upon which I shall frankly give you my Opinion, and endeavour to assist you in knowing your own Heart, and that of the Women.

In the mean time, whatever Pleasure I promise myself in this Correspondence, I can foresee several Difficulties attending my Undertaking. The Heart, which is to be the Subject of my Letters, is skilful in uniting so many Contrarieties, that whoever speaks of it, must necessarily seem to fall into a great many Contradictions. You think you grasp the Object, but embrace only a Shadow. 'Tis a downright Camelion, and viewed in different Lights, presents you with Colours quite opposite to one another, which nevertheless exist in the same Object. You must therefore expect to read a Number of Singularities. But, in short, I shall only propose to you my Ideas, which, very probably, will often appear to you more singular than just. But I leave it

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to you to judge of them as you please. I have still another Scruple to mention : I can easily foresee, that it will scarce be possible to be sincere, without slandering my Sex in some measure. But you want to know my Opinion of Love, and every thing relating to it ; and I find I have Resolution enough to speak to you freely about it.

I am to sup this Evening with M. *de la R. F. C.* with Madam *de la Sabliere*, and *La Fontaine*. If you please to be of the Party, *La Fontaine* will entertain you with two new Fables, which, I am informed, are no Disparagement to the Author. Make one with us, I pray, Sir. — But have I nothing to fear in this Correspondence which we are projecting? Love is so spiteful. Let me examine my Heart. No, it is occupied elsewhere ; and the Sentiments it has for you, resemble Friendship more than Love. At the worst, if I find my Head begin to turn, I must endeavour to get off as little hurt as possible.

We are then going to enter on a Course of *Morals*. Yes, Sir, of *Morals*! But do not be alarmed at the Word, I beseech you.

Gallantry alone is our Subject, and that has too great an Influence on the Manners, not to deserve to be particularly studied. —

This Project of ours diverts me extremely. Mean time I am afraid, left by reasoning too often with you, I shall sometimes become disagreeable; for you know well enough that I am an unmerciful Disputant, when I set about it. With another Heart than that which you know I have, I should have made the most compleat Philosopher that ever lived. Adieu. I am ready to begin whenever you think proper.

L E T T E R II.

YES, Sir, I will keep my Word with you, and on every occasion will tell you the Truth, even tho' it should be at my own Expence. I have a greater Firmness of Mind than you imagine, and fear that the Sequel of our Correspondence will induce you to think, that sometimes I push this Virtue even to Severity. You must then remember, that I am only a Woman in my outward Appearance, but that
my

my Heart and Mind is that of a Man. The Method I intend to pursue with you is this : As all that I want is only to explain myself, before I communicate my Ideas to you, my Design is to lay them before that excellent Man with whom we supped last Evening. It is true, that poor Humanity is no great Favourite of his, and he believes as little in Virtues as in Apparitions. But this Severity, softened by Indulgences for the Weakness of Mankind, will give you, I believe, the proper Species and Proportion of Philosophy, which is necessary to be used in the Company of the Fair Sex. Let us now proceed to the remainder of your Letter.

You tell me, that since you have entered into the World, you have met with nothing you expected to find in it : Disgust and Vexation accompany you wherever you go : You search after Solitude, and when you find it, you grow weary of it ; and, in short, you know not to what to attribute that Restlessness which torments you. I am going to relieve you ; for 'tis my Duty to give you my Opinion of every Difficulty you meet with ; and I do not doubt but you

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will

will frequently propose Questions to me, which will be full as puzzling to me as they have been to yourself.

That *Restlessness*, which you complain of, is owing to nothing else than your Heart's being disengaged. It was made to be sensible of Love, and, at present, it is without it. You have precisely what is called the need of being in Love. Yes, Sir, Nature, in forming us, has given us a certain Portion of Sensations, which ought to be exercised on some Object or other. Your Age is formed for the Sollicitudes of Love, and as long as your Heart is void of this Passion, you will still find something wanting, and the Disquiet you complain of will never come to an End. In a Word, Love is the Food of the Heart, as the Aliments are of the Body: To love is to satisfy the Desire of Nature; 'tis to supply a Want. But I would advise you to manage it so, if possible, as not to allow it to go the length of a Passion with you. In order to prevent this, I shall be almost tempted to approve the Advice which People give you, of preferring the Company of those Women who endeavour

endeavour to appear more amusing than solid, to that of those who want to inspire you with Esteem as well as Love. At your Age, when you have no Thoughts of entering into any serious Engagement, you have no Occasion for a Friend in a Woman; all that you want, and all you ought to search after, is an amiable Mistress.

The Company of Women of high Principles, or of those whose decayed Beauty obliges them to value themselves only on their great Qualities, is excellent for a Man, who, like themselves, is on the Decline; but such would be too good Company for you, if I may be allowed so to express myself. We stand in no need of Riches, but in proportion to our Wants; and the best Method for you, in my Opinion, is to attach yourself to those Women, who to an amiable Person, have joined a sweetness of Temper, a gay Humour, a Taste for the Pleasures of Society, and who are not startled at an Intrigue.

You will tell me, that in the Eyes of a reasonable Man, such Companions as these will appear too trifling; but do you think

that they ought to be judged so severely? Believe me, Sir, that if by ill Fortune they should acquire more Solidity in their Character, both you and they would be Losers by it. You want to find solid Qualities in the Women! Cannot you find them in a Friend? — Shall I tell you the whole Secret? It is not our Virtues which you have use for; 'tis of our Gaiety, and our Foibles. That Love which you might have for a Woman every way esteemable, might become too dangerous, and till you can think of Marriage, you ought not to search for any thing but Amusement among the Fair Sex. You ought to preserve only a slight Attachment to them, and take care not to engage more seriously with them; for let me tell you, if you do, you will come off badly in the End.

If you was not of a more solid way of thinking than the generality of young Men, I should speak to you in another Manner; but I find you are like to fall into the Extreme contrary to their nonsensical Trifling. You must therefore only attach yourself to a Woman, who, like a sprightly Child, can
amuse

amuse you with her agreeable Follies, whimsical Frolicks, and all those pretty Triflings, which are the Soul of Gallantry.

Shall I tell you what it is that renders Love dangerous? 'Tis the sublime Idea which we sometimes form of it: But, strictly speaking, Love, considered as a Passion, is only a blind Instinct, which we ought to know how to value; an *Appetite*, which determines us in favour of one Object rather than of another, without being able to give a Reason for our Taste. Considered as a Connection of Friendship, when Reason presides over it, 'tis no more a Passion, 'tis no more Love, 'tis an Esteem, affectionate: indeed I grant you, but quite composed, and incapable of disturbing you. If, following the Footsteps of our ancient Heroes of Romance, you conceive very high Ideas of this Passion, you will see, that this false Heroism changes Love into a melancholy, and often fatal Folly. 'Tis a real Enthusiasm; but if you disingage it from every thing which is lent it by Opinion, it will soon constitute your Happiness and greatest Pleasure. - Believe me, if Reason or Enthu-

fiatm had the ruling of Amours, Love would become either insipid or mad. The only Method of avoiding these two Extremes, is to follow the Road which I have pointed out to you. You want nothing but Amusement, and you will find it only in the Company of these Women I have been speaking of. Your Heart wants to be occupied, which they know well how to do. Try this Prescription of mine, and you will find it of service. — I promised to reason with you, and I think I have kept my Word pretty exactly. Adieu : I have just received an excellent Letter from M. *de St. Evremant*, to which I must send an Answer. At the same time I will mention to him what I have been writing to you, and I am pretty sure he will approve of my Sentiments.

To-morrow I shall have with me the Abbé *de Châteauneuf*, and perhaps M. *Moliere*. We shall read over again the *Tartuffe*, in which he is going to make some Alterations. Believe me, Sir, that all those who do not agree with me in what I have been saying to you, have more or less of that very Character.

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LETTER III.

IT seems you still persist obstinately in your first Opinion, notwithstanding all that I have said to you against it. You want, for a Mistress, a respectable Woman, and one, whom you can make a Friend of. These Sentiments, doubtless, would deserve to be praised, if in fact they could procure the Happiness you expect from them; but Experience proves to you, that all those fine Ideas are only mere Illusions. In order to amuse the Heart, are we only to search after serious Qualities? I should almost be tempted to believe, that the reading of Romances has hurt your Understanding. The poor Marquiss! he allows himself to be dazzled by the lofty Propositions which are made the Subjects of Conversation. But, my dear Sir, what do you expect to make of those Chimeras of Reason? I will tell you my Opinion: The Coin looks very well; 'tis a pity it is not current.

Whenever you intend to marry, find out a sensible Woman, full of Virtue and solid

Principles: These agree very well with the Dignity of Matrimony; (I had almost said the Gravity of it). But at present, when you have only an Amour upon your Hands, beware of being grave, and believe what I have said to you. I know your Wants better than you do yourself. Men commonly say, that they search for essential Qualities in Love: Blind Wretches that they are! they would be much to be pitied were they so unlucky as to find them. What would they gain by being edified? All that they want is only to be amused. I grant, that a Mistress as wise as you would chuse her to be, would make a Wife for whom you would have a very great Respect; but as to Passion, none at all. A Woman every way well qualified, would subject and humble you too much, to allow you to be long in Love with her. It would be impossible for you not to cease to love, when you were forced to esteem her, and even sometimes to admire her. So much Virtue is too civil a Reproach, too severe a Censurer of your Faults, not to stir up your Pride at last; and when that is mortified, adieu Love. Make but an exact

Analysis of your Sentiments, examine well your own Breast, and you will find that what I have told you is true. I have just as much Time as to bid you farewell.

LETTER IV.

I Am afraid, Sir, you will put me out of Humour at last. Good God, how ignorant you are on certain Occasions! I observe by your Letter, that you have not understood me. Do but consider: I did not advise you to make choice of a contemptible Object for a Mistress; that is what I never had the least Thought of; but I told you, that all you wanted was to have your Heart only fixed; and that in order to render this Attachment the more agreeable, you ought not to bend your Thoughts entirely on solid Qualities. I repeat it again, that a Man wants nothing but Amusement in Love; and I believe I may be allowed to be a proper Judge in the Affair. A Turn of Humour, an innocent Frolic, or an out-of-the-way Dispute, has a great Effect upon them, and attaches them
more

more than all the Reason in the World, and Solidity of Character.

A certain * Person, whom you esteem for the Justness and Force of his Ideas, told me one Day, *That Caprice in Women always attended Beauty, by way of Antidote to it.* I opposed this Opinion with so much warmth, that it was easy to discover I was of a different Sentiment. And indeed I am firmly persuaded, that Caprice attends Beauty only to animate its Charms, to exalt them, and render them more quick and poignant. There is no Passion more cold, and less durable, than Admiration. We are soon accustomed to look coldly on the same Features, be they ever so beautiful; and if they are not enlivened and put in Action by a little Pride, their Regularity itself presently destroys that Passion they had excited. A small Tincture of Frowardness alone can give to a beautiful Woman that Vanity which is necessary, in order to prevent the Indifference arising from seeing her always in the same Situation. In a word, unfortunately for a Woman of too equal a Tem-

* M. la Bruyere.

per, her Uniformity cloy, and creates Disgust : She is always the same Statue ; and a Man has always the Command of himself before her. She is so good and sweet-temper'd, that she will not even allow you the Liberty of wrangling ; and what a prodigious Pleasure this Liberty frequently is !

Put in her Place a Woman who is lively, capricious, and positive, (but only to a certain Degree) and you will presently see the Appearance altered : The Lover will find in the same Person the Pleasure of Variety. Caprice is the Salt in Gallantry which hinders it from corrupting. Jealousies, Quarrels, Reconcilements, and even slight Fits of Anger, are the Nourishment of Love. Enchanting Variety ! which fills and entertains a sensible Heart much more delightfully, than a Regularity of Behaviour, or the insipid Equality of what is called a good Character.

I know very well how to manage you Gentlemen : A Fit of Caprice in a Woman throws you into a Perplexity, which you have as much Trouble and Uneasiness to get out of, as to gain a Victory over a new Object :

ject : A little rough Treatment keeps you upon the Stretch ; you persist in struggling, but at the same Time in vanquishing and being vanquished. In vain Reason offers to assist you : You cannot comprehend how such a Phantom should domineer so tyrannically over you. You all say, that the Idol of your Heart is an Assemblage of Caprice and Folly ; but it is a naughty Child which you cannot help loving. These Efforts, which Reflection causes you to make, in order to disengage yourself, frequently serve only to bind faster the Chain ; for Love is never so strong, as when we think it ready to break by the Violence of a Quarrel. He lives in Storms, and with him every thing is turned topsy-turvy. If you try to reduce him to Regularity, he expires. In a word, what I want to say to you is this : Do not chuse for a Mistress a Woman, who has only sensible Qualities, but one who is sometimes subject to Fits of Humour, and will not hear Reason ; otherwise I must tell you, it will be no more an Intrigue, but a Marriage. I shall say no more to you.

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LETTER V.

I Agree with you, Sir, that a Woman who has nothing but Humour and Caprice, is a disagreeable Companion, and, at last, disgusting. I also agree, that these Inequalities of Temper must make Love a long Quarrel, and a perpetual Storm. Wherefore, it was not to a Person of this Character to whom I advised you to attach yourself. You constantly stretch beyond the Bounds of my Ideas. In my last Letter, I only painted to you an amiable Woman, and one who becomes still the more so by a Tincture of Caprice. But you have taken her for a Scold, and one who does nothing but rail at you. What a great Difference there is between us at present! When I mentioned Humour, I meant only that which gives a Pungency, raises Disgust, and sometimes even a little Jealousy in the Lover; in a Word, that which springs from Love itself, and not from that natural Ruggedness of Temper, which is commonly called *Humour*. Where it is Love that renders

ders a Woman unjust, and when that alone is the Cause of her Petulance, what Lover could be so delicate as to complain of her ! Do not these Sallies demonstrate the Violence of the Passion ? For my Part, I have always thought, that whoever has so much Command of himself, as to keep within just Bounds in Love, is far from being very amorous. Is it indeed possible for one to be in Love, without allowing one's self to be hurried away with the Transports of a violent Passion, and without suffering all the Revolutions which it necessarily occasions ? Certainly no. Can any one behold all those Agitations in the beloved Object, without a secret Pleasure ? At the very Time that you are complaining of her ill Treatment of you, and the Violence of her Passions, you are extremely pleased in your own Mind, at being conscious that you are beloved, nay even passionately ; and that that very Treatment is a Proof of it still the more convincing, by its being involuntary. It is that, Sir, which constitutes the secret Charm of those Pains which Lovers sometimes endure, and the Tears which they shed. But if you imagined that I wanted to
tell

tell you, that a Woman of a bad Temper, capricious, and quite a Termagant, would render you happy, you mistake me very much. I told you, and I shall always persist in my Opinion, that there must be something of Fickleness, Caprice, and Wrangling in an Intrigue, to prevent its growing insipid, and to render it lasting. But you must observe, that those Seasonings do not produce this Effect, except they flow from Love itself. If they proceed from a natural Bluntness, or a turbulent, envious, unreasonable Disposition, I am convinced myself, that they render a Woman hateful, and will be productive of nothing but disagreeable Quarrels. In such a Case, Love is a real Punishment, which a Person must free himself from as soon as possible.

L E T T E R VI.

YOU think then that you have produced an invincible Argument against me, by telling me, that one's Heart is not to be disposed of as one pleases; and consequently you are not at Liberty to chuse the Object of your Attachment. This is a most excellent Moral indeed! I beseech you, leave this commonplace Observation to the Women, who imagine

gine that by it they justify their Weakness. They must always have some Resource or other to fly to; like the honest Gentleman, whom our Friend *Montagne* speaks of, who, when the Gout pinched him, would have been very much vexed not to be able to exclaim against *That cursed Gammon!* 'Tis an Act of Sympathy, say they, which is stronger than we ———. Have Persons the entire Command of their own Hearts? It is no more lawful to make a Reply, after they have given such good Reasons. They have even established those Maxims so effectually, that it would be drawing the whole World on one's Back, to endeavour to refute them. But these very Maxims are so generally approved, only because it is the Interest of every Body to believe them. No Body suspects that Excuses of that Kind, far from justifying our Errors, are an open Declaration that we will not correct them. For my Part, I take the Liberty to dissent from the Multitude: It is a sufficient Proof for me, that it is not impossible to overcome one's Inclinations, that we are able to get the better of those which are unreasonable, or tend to bring Dishonour

Dishonour upon us. Pray, how many Women have we seen arrive at such a Pitch of Resolution, as to destroy in their Hearts a Weakness which had surprized them, as soon as they perceived that the Object of their Affection was unworthy of them? How many of them have smothered the most tender Love, and sacrificed it to the Convenience of a Settlement? An Equipage, Time, and Absence, are Remedies which a Passion, be it never so lively, is not able to resist; it grows weaker insensibly, and at last becomes quite extinct. I know very well, that to get off with Honour, in an Affair of this Kind, requires all the Force that Reason is Master of. I likewise easily comprehend, that the Difficulties which People imagine attend so important a Victory, discourage them from attempting it; so that tho' I should assert we have no invincible Inclinations in a speculative Sense, I must own, at the same Time, that there are very few of them actually vanquished in Practice. And this happens, only because we will not be at the Pains to try if we can succeed. But however that may be, every
thing

thing considered, I imagine that, the present Case being only an Affair of Gallantry, it would be foolish to put you to the Torture, to destroy that Inclination which you may have taken for a Woman who is more or less amiable; but at the same Time, as you are not yet particularly attached to any one, I persist in saying, that I was right in pointing out the Character to you, which I look upon as most capable of rendering you happy. It were doubtless to be wished, that delicate Sentiments, and real Merit, had more Influence over your Hearts, and were capable of satisfying and fixing them for ever; but Experience demonstrates, that this is not the Case. I do not reason then upon what you ought to be, but on what you really are: My Design is to paint the Heart as it is, and not such as I could wish it to be. There is no Body more concerned at the Depravity of your Taste, how indulgent soever I may appear to your Failings. But not being able to reform the Vices of the Heart, I want at least to teach you to make the best of them: Unable to render you wise, I endeavour to render you happy.

It

It has been said long ago, that to endeavour to destroy the Passions, would be attempting to annihilate us; all that is proper to be done, is only to keep them under due Subjection. They are the same in our Hands, as Poisons in Pharmacy; when prepared by a skilful Chemist, they become healthful Remedies.

L E T T E R VII.

PRAY, Sir, who doubts that it is not by essential Merit alone that you aim to please the Ladies? All I want to know is, what Idea you attach to this Expression. Do you call essential Merit Solidity of Thinking, Justness of Discernment, extensive Erudition, Prudence and Discretion? I am thoroughly convinced, that this Group of Virtues frequently embarrasses you more than it renders you happy: And if that be your Meaning, we entirely mistake each other. Reserve all these Qualities for the Correspondence which you are obliged to keep with your own Sex, who have agreed to set a proper Value upon them. But for that of Gallantry,

Gallantry, I advise you to exchange all these Virtues for so many Ornaments. Therein consists the only Merit which is esteemed in this Quarter: It is the only Coin that will pass, and you must be careful not to call it false. True Merit consists, perhaps, less in a real Perfection, than in that which is allowed by Compact. It is of more Service to have Qualities which are suitable to those whom we want to please, than to possess others which are considered as really valuable. In a Word, we must borrow the Manners, and sometimes even the Failings of Persons we are obliged to live with, if we desire to live agreeably with them.

What is the Destination of the Women with you! What Part are they to act? 'Tis no doubt to please; but the Charms and Graces of the Figure and Person, in short, all the amiable and shining Qualities, are the only Means of arriving at that. The Women possess them in a supreme Degree, and 'tis in these Qualities that they want you to resemble them. You may tax them as much as you will with Trifling, but they are in the right to cultivate them, seeing they

they are destined to render you happy. Is it not, in effect, to the Charms of our Company, and the Sweetness of our Manners, that you owe the most satisfactory Pleasures, the social Virtues; and, in short, your well-being itself? Tell me ingenuously, can the Sciences alone, the Love of Glory, Valour, and even Friendship itself, which you so justly esteem, be capable of rendering you perfectly happy? Or, at least, would the Pleasure which you receive from them, be lively enough to make you sensible that you was happy? Certainly not. Nothing of all this could free you from that disagreeable Want of Variety, which you would find yourselves oppressed with; and you would be of all Creatures the most to be pitied. But the Women have undertaken the Charge of dissipating this deadly Languor, with the lively Gaiety which they mix with their Conversation, and by the Charms which they are skilful in diffusing thro' an Intrigue: A fluttering Joy, a charming Madness, a sweet Intoxication, are alone capable of rousing your Attention, and of making you sensible of your Happiness: For, Sir there

is a great Difference between simply enjoying Happiness, and tasting the Pleasure of enjoying it. The Possession of what is necessary does not make a Man easy; 'tis the Overplus that makes him rich, and renders him sensible that he is so. In the same Manner, superior Qualities alone are not sufficient for rendering you amiable; 'tis perhaps a real Defect to have nothing but true Worth to recommend you. In order to be well received, you must be agreeable, entertaining, and necessary to the Pleasures of others. I can assure you, that this is the only Way to succeed, especially with the Women. Pray what Use can they make of your Knowledge, of the Justness of your Judgment, or the Exactness of your Memory, &c.? If you are possessed only of these Advantages, without some agreeable Talents to qualify them, far from pleasing, you will appear to them a formidable Censurer; and the Constraint you lay upon them will banish that Gaiety which they would have indulged themselves in, had you been of a different Temper. In short, how can they venture to appear amiable

LETTERS.

amiable in the Eyes of a Man, who is disagreeable by his Coldness, narrowly examines every Thing that passes, and is entirely upon the Reserve. It is impossible for us to be easy, except with those who are unguarded as well as ourselves, and who give us Opportunities of making Reprisals upon them. In a Word, too much Circumspection in a Person, has the same Effect on the Minds of others, as a cold Wind has upon one going out of a warm Apartment: I had almost said, that by our Reserve we shut up the Hearts of those about us, so that they dare not venture to disclose themselves.

You must then be very careful to avoid Coldness in Gallantry, by endeavouring never to shew yourself but in the most favourable Light. You must have read, that People please more by agreeable Failings, than by essential Qualities. Great Virtues resemble Pieces of Gold, which are much less useful than Money.

This Idea recalls to my Mind those People, who make use of Shells in Commerce instead of Money. Pray, Sir, do not you believe that even they are as rich as we, with

all the Treasures of *America*? One would indeed be tempted at first to look upon this Species of Riches as real Poverty; but one is convinced of the contrary, upon reflecting, that the Value of Metals is founded only on Opinion. Our Gold among these People would not be current. The Qualities, which you term essential, are the same Thing in Gallantry; there is no Occasion for any thing but Shells. What does it signify, what is the Token of the Agreement, provided the Commerce still subsists?

To conclude, if it be true, as you must own it is, that you cannot expect Happiness but from the agreeable Qualities of the Women, take my Word for it, you will never be able to please them, but by means of little Accomplishments of the same Kind with theirs. I repeat it again: You Gentlemen boast to us of your Learning, good Sense, &c. but tell me how insipid, and even how disgusting would Life become to you, were you condemned to confine yourselves entirely to solid Learning, and live only with Philosophers? I know you very well; you would soon become weary
of

of being admired; and, considering how you are formed, you would much sooner grow tired of Virtue than of Pleasure. Do not think then to impose yourself upon us as a Man of Merit, in the Sense that you intend it. True Merit is that which is esteemed by those whom we desire to please. Gallantry has its peculiar Laws, and the amiable Men are the Men of Merit with it.

L E T T E R VIII.

YOU have not long to go, Sir : Your Hour is come : The Description you have given me of your Situation, convinces me that you are in Love. The young Widow you mentioned to me, is, in effect, very capable of inspiring you with a Passion for her. The Chevalier de ——— has given me a very agreeable Picture of her. But you scarce begin to feel the Symptoms of that Passion, when you find fault with me for the Advices which I have given you. The Uneasiness which Love occasions in the Mind, and the other Mischiefs it produces, you tell me, are, as you think, really more

to be feared, than the Pleasures which it can bestow are to be desired. It is true a great many Gentlemen are of Opinion, that the Pains of Love are at least equal to its Pleasures. But without entering here upon a disagreeable Enquiry, in order to determine whether they are right or wrong, if you desire to know my Opinion of the Matter, Love is a Passion, which is neither good nor bad in itself; the Subjects of it alone determine it either the one Way or the other. All that I shall say in favour of it is this; that there is one Advantage it procures to us, which is abundantly superior to any of the Disadvantages which can be laid to its Charge: It forces us out of our former Situation, and puts us in Action, which is doing us the greatest Favour imaginable, I think I told you before, that the Mind of Man is formed to be active; and to put it in Motion is to fulfil the Intention of Nature. What would Youth be without Love? A tedious Malady. It would not be existing, but more properly *vegetating*. Love is the same to our Hearts, as the Winds are to the Sea; they, 'tis true, frequently raise Tempests, and sometimes are

are even the Occasion of Shipwrecks ; but then they likewise alone render it navigable : It is owing to the Fluctuation which they keep up in it, that it is preserved ; and if they render it dangerous, it is the Business of the Pilot to attend the Tackling accordingly.

But I return to my Subject ; and tho' perhaps your Delicacy may be shocked at the Liberty I take, I shall add, that besides the Need we have of being kept in Action, we have another physical and constitutional Appetite, which constitutes the primitive and essential Cause of Love. Perhaps it is not very decent for a Woman to talk to you in this Maner ; but you know that I would not use this Freedom with every Body, and this is not in the Style of a *trifling Conversation* ; we are talking philosophically. If my Propositions sometimes appear to you too rational for a Woman, remember what I told you not long ago. Since the Time I began to make use of my Reason, I have taken it into my Head to examine which of the two Sexes was the most numerous : I have observed that yours had no Reason to

complain of being ill-used in the Distribution of the Register, and therefore I have thought it no Injustice to commence *a Man*.

I shall not examine then, in your Stead, whether it be good or bad to fall in Love. I should chuse as soon to be asked, whether it is good or bad to be thirsty; and that they should publish an Edict, forbidding any Body Drink, because there are some who get themselves intoxicated. Since you have it not in your Power to shake off an Appetite, which is inseparably annexed to the mechanical Structure of your Body; different from our ancient Heroes of Romance, do not torment yourself in meditating on, and drawing Parallels between, the Advantages and Disadvantages of being in Love. Conduct it as I have advised you to do: Do not let it go the Length of what is called a Passion, but make it an Amusement.

I expect from hence you will attack me with your elevated Maxims, and tell me that one is not so much Master of one's self, so as to stop when one pleases. I view all those who embrace such Doctrines, with the same Eye as I look upon a Man, who thinks

thinks himself obliged, in Honour, to shew a great Concern on Occasion of a Loss or Accident, which others, who are interested in it, regard as very considerable. No-body knows better how to solace himself than he; but, at the same Time, he finds that his Tears give him Pleasure. He loves to feel that he has a Heart capable of pushing Sympathy to Excess; and this Reflection makes him relent still the more. He strives to nourish his Grief; nay, he even makes an Idol of it, and at last worships it from downright Habit. In the same manner, your Lovers, who have high Sentiments, corrupted either by Romances or Prudes, make it a Point of Honour to refine their Passions. By the Means of Delicacy they arrive at a superstitious Gallantry, of which they become the more doatingly fond, as it is entirely of their own creating. They are ashamed to reduce themselves to common Sense, and to become Men again. Let us be careful, dear Sir, not to give Way to such a ridiculous Weakness. This affected Manner belongs only to Fools in this Age. Formerly it was imagined that Love ought

to be reasonable; and they even wanted to make it serious, esteeming it only in Proportion to its Dignity. Now pray let me ask you, if requiring Dignity in a Child, is not depriving it of all its Beauties? Is it not transforming it into a grave old Man? I cannot help lamenting our honest Ancestors: That Passion, which with them was a mortal Languor, and a melancholy Phrenzy, is with us no more than a gay Folly, and a pleasing Delirium. Like mad Men as they were, they preferred the Horrors of Deserts and Rocks, to the Beauties of a Parterre adorned with Flowers. What a Number of Prejudices the Habit of reflecting has got the better of!

A Proof that these high Sentiments are only the Chimeras of Pride and Prejudice, is, that in this Age we see nothing of this Taste for mysterious Gallantry, nor any more Remains of these monstrous Passions. Do but affix Ridicule to the best established Opinion; nay more, to the Manner of Thinking which is looked upon as the most natural; presently both the one and the other will disappear, and People will be astonished to see, that those very Ideas which they
almost

almost worshipped, have no more real Foundation than the meekest Trifles, which decay like the Fashions. You must not then accustom yourself to deify that Passion which you feel for the amiable Countess, and you will find in the End, that Love, in order to be sincere, and render us happy, far from being conducted as a serious Affair, ought only to be treated slightly, and above all things with Gaiety. Nothing will make you more sensible of the Truth of what I have said to you, than the Sequel of your Amour; for I look upon the Countess as a Woman the least susceptible of a melancholy Passion, of any Person in the World. Your high Sentiments will surely give her the Vapours; remember I tell you so.

My Indisposition still continues. I have a great Mind to tell you, that I keep at home all Day, and perhaps you will construe this as an Invitation to come and see me. If you please however to come and tell me what you think of M. Racine's *Bajazet*, you will do me a Favour. I am told that *la Chammelay** excels herself in this Play.

* The Name of a famous French Actress, who flourished at that Time.

The Revival of my Letter has put me out of Humour with you. I find that Gravity is really a catching Disease. Judge then how much of it you will communicate in Love, since you even give it to those who endeavour to persuade you against it. There is something very strange in it, that in order to prove to you that Love ought to be managed with Gaiety, I should be obliged to put on a serious Air.

LETTER IX.

YOU are then, it seems, highly dis-
obliged with what I said last. I have
blasphemed against Love, and degraded it
by calling it a Want. As for you, Sir, you
think more highly on the Subject. What
passes within yourself is a Proof of this;
and you imagine nothing can surpass that
pure and delicate Passion with which your
Heart is possessed. To view the Countess,
to hold a whining Conversation with her, to
hear the soft Tone of her Voice, and to render
her little trifling Services, is the utmost Extent
of all your Desires; and this, in your Opi-
nion,

nion, constitutes supreme Happiness. Far be these gross Sentiments from you, which I unworthily substitute instead of your sublime Metaphysics: Sentiments only becoming groveling Souls, entirely devoted to the Pleasures of Sense. How much was I mistaken! Ought I to have imagined, that the Countess was a Woman capable of being influenced by Motives so unworthy of her? And to make her suspect the like Views in you, would not this be exposing you infallibly to her Hatred and Contempt, &c.?

Are not these the very Inconveniencies which my Doctrine makes you apprehend? My poor Marquis! you have deceived yourself by your Prejudice, against the true Causes of your Sentiments. Let me have all your Attention; I want to free you from your Error, but with a Tone agreeable to the Importance of what I have to say to you. I mount upon the Tripod; I feel the Presence of the God possessing me. I rub my Forehead with the Air of a Person who meditates on profound Truths, and is about to utter Things of the greatest Consequence. I am going to reason in Form.

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The Men, I do not know from what fantastical Principle, have made it shameful to follow the reciprocal Inclination which Nature has given to the two Sexes. They have found however that they could not absolutely stop her Voice. What have they done then to rid themselves of this Embarrassment? They have attempted to substitute the outward Shew of a mysterious Passion, to the mortifying Necessity of appearing honestly to satisfy a Want. They have insensibly accustomed themselves to think of nothing but a thousand sublime Trifles: and this is not all; they have at last arrived to persuade themselves that all this acquired trifling, the Work of a heated Imagination, constitutes the very Effence of their Affections. Behold then Love become a Virtue, at least they have given it the Appearance of it. But let us break the Charm, and take the following Example.

At the beginning of their Amour, two Lovers think themselves animated with the most delicate Sentiments. They exhaust their whole Fund of Wit, high-flown Compliments, and the most refined metaphysical Enthusiasm;

Enthusiasm; they are for some Time intoxicated with the Idea of their Perfections. But let us pursue them in the Course of their Courtship: Nature by and by recovers her Right, and their Vanity being satisfied by the Shew of these flattering Compliments, leaves the Heart at liberty to think and express itself; and, despising the Pleasures of Love, they are astonished to find themselves, after a long Circuit, no farther advanced than a common Peasant, who would have begun just where they ended.

A *Prude*, with whom I argued this Point one Day, fell into a violent Passion. "What! Madam, said she, with a kind of Indignation, you alledge then that a virtuous Woman, and one who has only honourable Intentions, such as Marriage, is wholly influenced by such singular Views as these. You think then that I, for Example, who submitted thrice to Matrimony from a Principle of Virtue, and who, in order to preserve my Husbands chaste, never would lie in a separate Bed; you think, I say, that I have behaved in this manner, only to procure myself what you call Pleasure. Believe me,

Madam, you are greatly mistaken. It is true, I never refused to fulfil the Duties of Matrimony; but I can assure you, that for the most part, I yielded either thro' Complaisance or Inadvertency, and always complained of the Importunity of the other Sex. We love them, and marry them on account of the Qualities of their Hearts and Minds; and there is no Woman, except such as I do not chuse to mention, who lays her Account with any other Benefit from it."—— I interrupted her, and more out of Spite than Inclination, I pushed the Argument still a little further. I convinced her, that what she said was a new Proof of the Justness of my Opinion. The Reason you draw, said I, from the lawful Views of Marriage, proves that those who have such Views, aim at the same thing as two ordinary Lovers; and perhaps still more earnestly, only with this Difference, that they like a little more Ceremony. This last Reflection put her out of all Patience. You join, says she, flinging herself from me, Impiety to Lewdness. Thus she went away; and I was at the Trouble to inform myself particularly about her afterwards.

afterwards. Would you suspect, Sir, that this Prude, who was so very delicate, should fall into such frequent Inadvertencies with her Husbands, who were all three young and vigorous, as to have buried them every one in a very short Time?

Be convinced of your Mistake then, and drop this Chimera. Preserve for Friendship the Delicacy of Sentiments. Take Love for what in reality it is; for the more Honour and Dignity that you bestow upon it, the more dangerous you will render it. The more sublime the Idea is that you form of it, the less just will it always be. Take the Word of a Person who is no Stranger to the Heart: 'Whoever,' says he, 'thinks that he loves his Mistress for the Love of herself, is greatly deceived *.'

L E T T E R X.

THE Conversation which the Countess holds with you upon Virtue, and the Delicacy she would require in a Lover, has I find startled you. You imagine that she

* M. de la R. F. C.

will

will always appear as severe to you as she does at present. It seems all I have said to you has not removed your Fears. You even think you favour me, when you only doubt of my Maxims; and, if you durst, you would condemn them all together. I believe you are in earnest when you express yourself in this Manner. It is not your Fault that you do not yet see clearly into your own Situation; but in Proportion as you advance, the Cloud will dissipate, and you will perceive with Surprize the Truth of what I have said.

As long as you are in cold Blood, or at least till Passion has carried you to a certain Pitch of Assurance, every Thing appears serious to you. To hope for the least Favour is a Crime. You tremble at indulging yourself in the most innocent Embrace. At first you demand nothing, or at least so very little, that a Woman thinks herself obliged in Conscience to reward your Modesty. In order to obtain this trifling Favour, you protest that you will never demand another; tho' in the mean Time, while you are making these Protestations, you advance, and
get

get acquainted together. She allows you this innocent Freedom; which appears to her of so little Importance, that she would grant it to any other, had she been ever so little familiar with him. But in the Event, that which appears to be of so little Consequence To-day, compared with the Favour that was granted Yesterday, is found to be very considerable, in Comparison with what was obtained at first. A Woman, encouraged by your Discretion, does not see the insensible Gradation of her Weaknesses. She has so much Command of herself, and the little Favours which you require of her at first, appear to her so easy to be refused, that she believes she shall have the same Power, whenever any thing more serious is proposed to her. What do I say? she flatters herself that her Resistance will increase in Proportion to the Importance of the Favours which may be required of her. She has so great a Confidence in her Virtue, that she even provokes Danger; she tries its Force, and is willing to know how far some slight Condescensions may be carried. Rash Woman that she is! she only thereby ac-
customs

customs her Imagination to Images which will certainly seduce her in the End. What a great Length will she find that she has gone, without ever dreaming that she had changed her Situation. And if upon reflecting on what is past, she is surprized at having granted so much, the Lover will be no less so at his having obtained it.

But I will go further, and I am very well persuaded, that sometimes there is not even any need of Love to get the better of us. I knew a Woman, who, tho' lovely, had never in the least been suspected of an Intrigue. Fifteen Years Marriage had not at all lessened her Tenderneſs for her Husband; and their Faithfulness to each other might even be quoted as an Example. One Day, when they were in the Country, some of her Friends staid so late with her, that they were obliged to lie all Night at her House. In the Morning, the Maids were busy in waiting on the Ladies, and she was alone in her Apartment, when a Gentleman, who was very familiar with her, but in an innocent Manner, came in to her to make her the Compliment usual on such an Occasion.

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He offered to assist her in some trifling Services at her Toilette. The Undress which she was in, furnish'd him with a very natural Opportunity of saying some gallant Things to her, on some particular Charms which were not in the least decay'd. She declined them smiling, and looked upon them as meer Compliments. Mean while by Degrees their Passions arose; and some faint Attempts, which could hardly be perceived at first, increased by Degrees to resolute Attacks. They struggled together, both of them grew warm, and the Woman was ruined, when she thought she was only innocently amusing herself. But how much must they be astonished and perplexed after such an Excursion? They were never able to comprehend since, how it was possible they could be led astray so far, without having the least previous Inclination that way. Here I cannot forbear crying out: Ye Mortals, who trust too much to your Virtue, tremble at this Example! Whatever Resolution you may feel in yourselves, there are unlucky Moments, when the most virtuous Woman is the most weak. The Reason of this Paradox,

radox, is because Nature is always watchful, and always tending towards its main Point. The Necessity of loving, constitutes in a Woman a Part of herself; her Virtue is only an Ornament.

The Discourse of your lovely Countess may then be really sincere, tho' in Cases of that Kind a Woman is always apt to exceed. But she imposes on herself, if she hopes to preserve such severe and delicate Sentiments to the End. You may be very sure that all these Female Metaphysicians differ nothing in the main from other Women. Their Behaviour is indeed more artful, and their Morals more rigid; but carefully examine their Actions, and you will find that their Amours always terminate in the same Manner, as those of Women who have the least Delicacy. They form a kind of precise Set by themselves. In a word, as I one Day told Queen *Christiana* of * *Sweden*, they are the Jansenists of Love.

* *Ninon* saw that Princess in the Journey she made to *France*. See the Authors quoted in the Prefatory Epistle.

You

You ought then, Sir, to be upon your Guard against all that the Women say on the Subject of Gallantry. All the fine Systems, which they make such a pompous Shew of, are only vain Phantoms, which surprize People who are easily imposed upon; but in the Eyes of a sensible Man, this Trash of studied Phrases is nothing but Parade, which he laughs at, and which does not hinder him from discovering their true Sentiments. The Evil they speak of Love, and the Efforts they make against it; the affected Want of Taste for Pleasures; the Measures which they take to get the better of it, and the Fear which they have of being ensnared by it, all this proceeds entirely from Love. It is rendering it Homage in their manner; it is really being posselt by it. Love knows how to put on a thousand different Shapes with them. Like Pride, it lives by its own Destruction, and seems to destroy itself, only to reign the more secure. Good God! what a Letter this is; but to go to justify its Length, would be to spin it out the more. Adieu!

L E T-

LETTER XI.

I Was charmed with your Letter, Sir. But do you know for what Reason? It is because it gives me an evident Proof of the Truth of the Doctrine I have been preaching up to you of late. And to complete the whole, you have forgot all your Metaphysics. You describe the Charms of the Countess to me with an Air of Complaisance, which proves that your Sentiments are not quite so delicate as you would persuade me to think they are, and as you actually think them yourself. Tell me freely, if your Love was not the Offspring of the Senses, would you have so much Pleasure in considering that Shape, those Eyes which enchant you, and that Mouth which you paint in such lively Colours? If the Qualities of the Mind alone could seduce you, there is a Woman of fifty, who would perhaps be still more powerful in that Respect than the Countess; and you see her every Day. The Person I mean is her Relation. Why do not you rather fall in Love with her? Why do

do you neglect a hundred Women of her Age, Ill-favouredness and Merit, who make Advances to you, and who would act the same Part by you, as you do by the Countesses? Besides, why do you so passionately desire to be distinguished by her above other Men? Why does it make you uneasy, if she behaves complaisantly to them? Will her Esteem for them, in the least diminish that which she may have for you? Are Rivalships and Jealousies known in Metaphysics? I do not believe it. I have Friends, but do not look upon them as Rivals, nor am I at all jealous when they love another Woman. Friendship is a Passion which has no Dependence on the Senses. The Soul alone receives the Impression of it, and it loses nothing of its Worth by dividing itself amongst several at the same Time. Draw the Paralel with Love, and you will find that the Object of Friendship is different from that of Love, and own that in the main I am not so unreasonable as you thought me at first to be: Nay further, that it is very possible for you to have in Love as grovelling a Mind as that of several others, whom you

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have

have been pleased to accuse of want of Delicacy. I would not condemn the Men alone : I am quite free with you ; and I believe I am certain, that if the Women would tell the Truth, they would very soon allow, that they have almost as little Delicacy as yourselves. In short, if they considered nothing in Love but the Pleasures of the Mind ; if they had no Hopes of pleasing but by their good Sense and good Characters, do you think they would endeavour so assiduously to please by their personal Charms ? What has the Mind to do with a fine Skin, an elegant Shape, or a well-turned Arm ? How their real Sentiments contradict those they affect ! Observe them, and you will be persuaded, that they have no Design of excelling but by their sensible Charms, and that every Thing else goes for nothing with them. Harken to them, and you will be tempted to believe, that these are the Things in the World they despise the most. But I am rather officious in undeceiving you in this respect ; I ought to leave you to their Care to convince you of your Mistake. They will probably find it but

too easy a Task, to inspire you with Sentiments opposite to those you have at present.

I am to go this Evening to Mademoiselle *de Raymond's*, to hear the two Musicians *Camus* and *Ytier* perform there. Madam *de la Sabliere*, *de Salins*, and *de Monforeau*, with Mademoiselle *de Fienne* are also to be there. Will not you make one in such an agreeable Party?

L E T T E R XII.

YOU take on very fast, Sir! What, two Nights already without Sleep! Sure this can be nothing else but Love. It is impossible to be mistaken. You have discovered your Passion with your Eyes; you have even mentioned it in plain Terms, and yet there has not been the least Notice taken of what you suffer. This cruel Usage of you cries out for Vengeance. Is it possible, that after a whole Week's Pains and Assiduity, she should be barbarous enough not to give you the least Hope! This is what I cannot easily conceive. So long a Resistance surpasses all Probability. The Countess must

be one of the Heroines of the last Age. But if you begin to lose Patience now, only consider how long a Time you must have suffered, if you had continued to publish the high Sentiments of your Passion. You have already made more Progress in eight Days, than the deceased *Celadon* would have done in as many Months. Mean time, to speak seriously, are your Complaints well founded? You accuse the Countess of Ingratitude, Insensibility, Disdain, &c. but with what Justice do you express yourself in this manner? Will you never believe what I have told you a hundred Times? Love is a real Caprice, and involuntary even in the Person who suffers from it. How then can you imagine, that the beloved Object should be obliged to return the least Acknowledgment for a Passion which is blind, and which she has no hand in? You Men have something extremely singular about you. You are highly offended, if a Woman does not return your amorous Looks with Eagerness. Your Pride rising up, accuses her of Injustice, as if it was her Fault that your Head is turned; or as if she was obliged to be seized

seized, at the same Time with you, with the same Complaint. Tell me, is the Countess to be blamed, because she still keeps her Senses, after you have lost yours? Cease then to accuse her and complain of your Condition. Endeavour rather to communicate your Disease to her. I know you very well; you are very engaging. It is very possible she may suffer too soon for entertaining favourable Sentiments of you. As for the rest, I can leave it to her to do all that is necessary to subdue you, and to inspire you with such a Taste as I wish she may, for your own Happiness. I do not think her susceptible of a very serious Attachment. Lively, romping, trifling, absolute, and determined, it is impossible but she must cut out a great deal of Work for you. A Woman that is loving and obliging, would disgust you. You must be treated somewhat bluntly, in order to be amused, and have your Passion kept up. No sooner the Mistress commences the Lover, than he presently grows cool; nay, more, he becomes a Tyrant, and at last puts on a Disdain, which terminates in Disgust and Inconstancy. You have found

then what you wanted in that gay Lady on whose account you suffer this painful Martyrdom! The poor Marquis, what Storms he has to encounter! How many Quarrels I foresee? How many Vexations! How many Vows of leaving her! But remember, that you will suffer from all this Agitation, if you treat Love like the Heroes of Romance; while on the contrary, it will be to you a Source of Pleasure, provided you conduct it like a reasonable Man. But will it not be impertinent in me to continue my Correspondence with you? The Moments you spend in reading my Letters, will be so many little Thefts committed on Love. What would I give to be a Witness of all your Situations! In short, can there be any thing more amusing to a Person in cold Blood, than the violent Distractions of an amorous Lover?

LETTER XIII.

IT seems then, Sir, you are not well pleased that I should talk so slightly of your present Condition. You want by
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all means to make me look upon your Amour as a very serious Affair ; but I shall take care of that. Do not you observe, that my manner of reasoning with you is in Consequence of my Principles. I talk lightly of a thing which I look upon as frivolous, or merely amusing ; but when I treat of a serious Affair, on which your future Happiness may depend, you shall find I will speak in a proper Tone. I would not then console with you, because I am persuaded that whatever you may have to complain of, is entirely owing to yourself. With a Turn of Imagination, that which now seems to you a Pain, may be rendered a Pleasure. In order to succeed in it, follow my Advice, and you will find it of Service to you. But let us proceed to the second Article of your Letter.

You say you are the more surprized at the Coldness of the Countess, because you believe that it is not sincere. Your Conjectures, I find, are founded on the Indiscretion of her Friends. Nay, the Good which you know she has said of you to them, was the first Cause of the Passion you have since en-

tertained for her. By this Mark I discover the Men. The least Word which escapes from a Woman, makes them believe that she has Views upon them. Every thing has an Affinity to their Merit; their Vanity lays hold of all, and turns it to its own Advantage. If you examine them strictly, you will find that they almost all love merely out of Gratitude; and the Women are no less unreasonable in this respect than they. So that Gallantry is to be considered as a Kind of Traffic, in which we always wish to have our Correspondents to be beforehand with us, and we constantly think that we are obliged to them; and you know very well, that Pride is much more forward to discharge an Obligation, than it is to bestow one. But, how often do we impose on ourselves in this respect? How often does it happen, that when we only intend to make Acknowledgments, we are really making Advances? If two Lovers would agree to express themselves with Sincerity upon the Beginning and Progress of their Passion, what Confessions would they make to one another? *Eliza*, on whom *Valerius* passed a general Com-

Compliment, answers it, perhaps, without any Design, in a more obliging Manner than is common on these Occasions. That is enough; *Valerius* quits the Idea which he had of *Eliza* just before, and from a careless Gallant, becomes more obsequious. Thus a mutual Fire is insensibly kindled between them, which at last blazes out, and they are actually in love. Was you to tell *Eliza*, that it was she who made the first Advances, nothing would appear to her more unjust; tho', in the mean time, nothing would be more true. From whence I conclude, that to consider it justly, Love is almost always more owing to Vanity, than to that Sympathy which is termed invincible. Do but consider the Origin of all Amours; they begin by reciprocal Praises which Lovers bestow on each other. It has been said, that Love is conducted by Folly; but for my Part, I should rather chuse to say by Flattery; and that it is impossible for it to take Possession of the Heart of a fine Woman, till after it has paid the Tribute to her Vanity. Add to all this, that the general Ne-

cessity we are in of loving, imposes upon us. Like those Enthusiasts, who, by the Force of Imagination, believe that they really see those Objects to which their Mind is firmly attached; in the same manner, we imagine we perceive in others those Passions which we are desirous of finding in them.

Beware then, Sir, of suffering yourself to be blinded by a false Opinion. The Countess very probably may have spoke handsomely of you, only with an Intention to do you Justice; and I can assure you that you wrong her, if you suspect her of Falshood with regard to you. Besides, why would you not allow her to dissemble her Passion for you, if you have been the Cause of it? Are not the Ladies at liberty carefully to conceal their Sentiments from you? Does not the bad Use which you make of being certainly beloved by them, justify their Conduct?

LETTER XIV.

NO, Sir, the Curiosity of Madam *de Seigné* has not at all offended me. On the contrary, I am very glad that she
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was desirous of seeing the Letters you received from me. She imagined, no doubt, that if the Subject was Gallantry, it could only be upon my Account; of which she has seen her Mistake. She will now find, that I am not so great a Trifler as she imagined; and I look upon her as candid enough to entertain, for the future, another Opinion of *Ninon*, than she formerly had of her. For I know very well, that she has not spoke of me much to my Advantage*. But her Injustice to me, shall never have any Influence on my Friendship for you. I have Philosophy enough to keep up my Spirits, when I do not obtain the Approbation of Persons, who judge me without knowing me: But let what will happen, I shall continue to speak to you with my usual Frankness. And I am very certain that *Madam de Sevigné*, in spite of all her Delicacy, will

* *Madam de Sevigné* appears in her Letters, not to have had so favourable an Idea of *Mademoiselle de Lenclor*, as all the other Authors of that Time, who mentioned her, have given us; which may possibly be owing to her attributing to her that Dissipation, in which the *Marquis de Sevigné* passed the first Years of his Life.

in her Heart be more frequently of my Opinion, than outwardly she will appear to be. But I proceed to your Affairs.

Well, Sir, after an infinite deal of Pains and Affiduity, you imagine you have at last softened this Heart of Marble. I am extremely glad of it; but I cannot help smiling, to see you interpret after that manner the Sentiments of the Countess. You are in the same Error with the rest of Mankind; and I must convince you of it, however pleasing it may be to you. You all believe, that it is your Merit alone that kindles the Passions in the Hearts of the Women, and that the Qualities of the Heart and Mind are alone productive of that Love which they conceive for you. How much you are mistaken! It is true you only believe it, because it flatters your Pride. But examine impartially, if possible, the Motive which determines you, and you will presently be convinced that you impose upon yourselves, and that we also impose on you; that every thing considered, you are the Dupes of your own Vanity, and of ours likewise; That the Merit of the Person beloved, is only

only the Excuse for that Passion, and not the Cause of it; in short, that this whole enthusiastic Intrigue, on both Sides, is always bounded by a Desire of satisfying that Want, which I mentioned at first as the original Spring of this Passion. This is a very hard and mortifying Truth; but it is nevertheless certain for all that. We Women again enter into the World with this Want undetermined; and, if we prefer one Person to another, we yield less to Merit than to an Instinct which is constitutional, and generally blind. As a Proof of this, I need only mention these foolish Passions, with which we are often intoxicated, for Persons absolutely unknown to us, or at least for Men with whom we are not so sufficiently acquainted, as to make our Choice not always imprudent in its Origin. If we are happy in this respect, it is by meer Chance. We attach ourselves then always without a sufficient Examination; and I may very well be allowed, to compare Love to an Appetite which we sometimes feel for one Dish more than another, without being able to give a Reason for it. I send those Chi-

meras of your Self-love very cruelly a packing; but I tell you what is true. The Love of a Woman flatters you, because you believe it supposes Merit in the Object beloved. You do her too much Honour, or, to speak more properly, you have too good an Opinion of yourselves. Believe me, it is not for yourselves that we love you: To be sincere with you, in Love we consult only our own Happiness. Caprice, Interest, Vanity, Constitution, and the want of something to occupy us when we have no Amour; these are the Springs of those high Sentiments, which we endeavour to pass upon the World as Divine. 'Tis not your great Qualities which touch us; if they have any share in the Reasons which determine us in your Favour, 'tis not upon our Hearts, but on our Vanity that they operate; and the greatest Part of those Things which are pleasing to us in you, if they are well considered, render you for the most part ridiculous or despicable. But what would you have us to do? We stand in need of an Adorer, in order to preserve in us the Idea of our Excellence; we want a complaisant Person,

Person, who is capable of excusing our Caprices; in short, we want a Man; Chance presents one to us preferable to another, and we accept of him, tho' we did not make Choice of him. In a word, you think the Women love you merely on account of yourselves. Poor Dupes! you are only the Instruments of their Pleasures, or the very Sport of their Caprices. In the mean time, we ought to do them Justice, and allow, that they do not wilfully impose thus upon you. Those Sentiments which I explain here, are by no means well understood by them; on the contrary, they sincerely imagine themselves to be determined and conducted only by these great Ideas, which their Vanity and yours nourishes; and it would be a flagrant Piece of Injustice to tax them with Falshood in this Respect. But they equally deceive both themselves and you, without being sensible of it.

You see that I here reveal to you the Secrets of the Good Goddess; judge then of my Friendship for you, since I labour to instruct you at the Expence of my own Sex. The better you know the Women, the fewer

er Follies will they be able to make you commit.

L E T T E R XV.

UPON my Word, Sir, I cannot comprehend how you are able to suffer that serious Strain, in which I sometimes write to you. It would appear as if I had no other Intention in my Letters, than to deprive you of your agreeable Illusions, in order to substitute mortifying Truths in their Stead. I must however get rid of this Disease of making Reflections. I am thoroughly sensible, that agreeable Falshoods are more pleasing than the most refined Truths; but I must be finding fault in spite of myself. I find myself even now in a philosophical Humour, and you must resolve to suffer a Broadside of Morality, which I am preparing for you. After that, I promise to entertain you with more Gaiety. In answer then to your Letter, I send you the following.

No, I will not retract a Word that I have said. You may quarrel with me as long as
you

you please, on the bad Opinion which I seemed to entertain of my Sex in my last Letter. Is it my Fault that they furnish me with disagreeable Truths? Besides, do you know, Sir, that a Woman is the most apt to think ill of her own Sex?

I am resolv'd, however, to justify myself very seriously from those Ideas which you have conceived of my way of thinking. I must tell you, that I am neither envious nor unjust. If I mentioned my own Sex rather than yours in my last Letter, do not think that my Design was to detract from the Women. I only intended by that to let you see, that without being in this respect more blameable than the Men, they were however more dangerous; because they are accustomed more than you to conceal their real Sentiments. In short, you will own much sooner than they which is your real Object in Love. Mean time, when they assure you that their Inclination for you has no other Source than the Sense of your Merit and of your good Qualities, I have already told you, that I am really persuaded they are sincere. I even do not doubt, that
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should they arrive at less Delicacy in their way of thinking, they would strive as much as possible to dissemble it to themselves. But the Motives which I have mentioned to you, exist nevertheless in the bottom of their Hearts ; they are nevertheless the true Sources of that Inclination they feel for you, and however they may strive to believe that they are determined by the most refined Causes, that Effort makes no Change in the Nature of Things. They dissemble their Deformity in this respect with as much care, as they would take to conceal a Set of Teeth which disfigures a Face that is otherwise very handsome. Nay, even when they are alone, they will be afraid to open their Mouth ; and by means of concealing this Defect from others, and of hiding it from themselves likewise, at last they come to forget it, or at least to think slightly of it. As for the rest, I agree with you, that you would be too great a Loser, if both the Women and you should always shew yourselves as you really are. The World has agreed to act the Farce ; and to discover your real Sentiments, would not be acting the

the Part of the Player, it would be substituting a real Character, instead of the feigned one you was to represent. Let us then enjoy the Enchantment, without endeavouring to discover the Charm which amuses and imposes upon us. To anatomize Love, is to endeavour to get rid of it. *Psyche* lost *Cupid*, for her Curiosity to know who he was. And I am tempted to believe, that this Fable was intended by way of Lesson to those who want to analyse Pleasures.

I will then correct my Error, if I told you that you was in the wrong to be proud of the Choice of the Women, and of the Passion they have for you. If I have said, that the Motives which determine them are far from redounding to the Honour of the Men, I add here, that they are as much deceived, if they imagine that those Sentiments, of which you make such a pompous Show, are always produced by the Force of their Charms, or by the Impression of their Merit. How often does it happen, that these Men who address them with a respectful Air; who display to them such delicate and flattering Sentiments; in a word, who seem

seem to live only for them, and by them, and have no other Desires but to make them happy: How often, I say, are those very Men, who make a Shew of such fine Sentiments, determined by Reasons quite opposite to them. Do but examine and penetrate into those innocent Souls, and in one of them, instead of this disinterested Love, you will find nothing but Desires; in another, only the Design of sharing his Mistress's Fortune, or the Honour of enjoying a Woman of her Rank; in a third, you will find Motives which are still more mortifying, *viz.* that of giving Jealousy to another Woman whom he is really in Love with, and of appearing to attach himself to a second Mistress, only to make a Merit with the other of leaving this one with *Eclat*. In short, what shall I say? the Heart is a Riddle not to be explained; 'tis a strange Composition, made up of all Sorts of Contrarieties. We imagine we know what passes in it; we see the Effect, but are ignorant of the Cause. Providing its Sentiments were expressed with Sincerity, this Sincerity itself ought not to make us secure.

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For perhaps these very Sentiments have quite contrary Causes to those which it thinks it feels. Thus the Men, as well as Women, almost never know exactly what it is that makes them to will or to feel in this or the other Manner. But after all, they have taken the right Side of the Question; 'tis explaining every thing to their own Advantage, to indemnify themselves by the Imagination of their real Misery, and to accustom themselves, as I believe I told you before, to construe all their Sentiments to be divine. And as all the World finds their Vanity flattered by it, no-body has undertaken to reform this Practice, or even to examine whether it is erroneous. Adieu. If you come this Evening, you will find some Friends with me, whose Gaiety will make you an Amends for the Seriousness of this Epistle.

LETTER XVI.

IS it possible, that what you write to me can be true? Does the Countess still persist in keeping you at a Distance? The Air of Indifference with which she receives all
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your Addressee, testifies a Coldness which quite dispirits you. I believe I am able to explain this Paradox. I am no Stranger to your Temper; you are gay, frolicksome, and engaging in the Eyes of the Women, as long as you are not touched with them; but I have observed that those who affect you, render you timid. This Quality might impose upon a Woman of low Rank; but the Heart of a Woman of Fashion must be attacked with other Weapons. The Countess is well acquainted with the World. Take my Advice; leave to the *Celadons* lofty Expressions and high Sentiments; let them run out in Praises of Perfection. I can tell you for our part, there are very few among us, who do not chuse to be treated a little bluntly, rather than with too much Delicacy. The Men lose more by want of Assurance, than they gain by Merit.

The more Timidity a Lover discovers before us, the more it interests our Pride to increase it; and the stronger Impression that our Shyness makes upon him, the greater Respect do we still require of him. If you have

have any Regard for us, do not suppose us to be so extremely virtuous, for by that means you will lay us under the Necessity of being so. Do not set so high a Value on your Conquest over us, and beware of considering our Defeat as a difficult Affair. Accustom our Imagination gradually to see you doubt of our Indifference. Very frequently the most certain Means of being beloved, is that of being firmly persuaded that you are so. When the Mind is disingaged, we find ourselves easy. Whenever we see a Lover, tho' never so well persuaded of our Approbation of his Passion, treat us with that Respect which our Vanity requires, we conclude, without being sensible of it, that he will act in the same manner, even after he is assured of the Affection which we have for him. What Boldness will not this inspire him with! What Progress may he not promise himself to make in our Affections? But if he gives us warning to be upon our Guard, it is not the Heart which we then defend; 'tis no longer our Virtue, but our Pride which is engaged, and that is the most obstinate Enemy you have to vanquish
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in the Women. In short, what shall I say? We want only to conceal that we have consented to be beloved. Put a Woman only in a Situation of saying, that it was to a kind of Violence or Surprize alone that she yielded; and persuade her that you do not the less esteem her on that Account, and I shall be answerable for your gaining her Heart. Treat the Countess in the manner her Character requires. She is lively and frolicksome, and you must make use of trifling to allure her into Love. Let her not even discover, that she distinguishes you from other Men; and be you as sprightly as she is frolicksome. Establish yourself in her Heart, without letting her know that you have any such Design. She will then love you without being sensible of it, and some time or other she will be astonished to find, that she has made such Advances, without having suspected any thing of the matter.

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LETTER XVII.

PERHAPS, Sir, you will think me still more cruel than the Countess. It is true, she is the Cause of the Uneasiness you suffer; but I go still further, and take Pleasure in laughing at it. Oh! I sympathize with you as much as any body can do, and the Trouble you are in appears to me very great. In short, how can one run the Risk of declaring a Passion to a Woman, who takes a malicious Pleasure in avoiding all Opportunities for it? Sometimes she appears touch'd, and sometimes she is the most inattentive Woman in the World to all that you do to please her. She gives a ready Ear, and returns sprightly Answers to the amorous Compliments, and forward Proposals, of a certain Chevalier, a professed *Petit Maitre*; whilst to you she talks seriously, or with an Air of Indifference; and if you want to express yourself in a tender affectionate Manner, she answers you carelessly, or perhaps changes the Subject. All this intimidates you, and makes you despair. The

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poor Marquis ——— ! he does not see that all this proceeds entirely from Love ! That Heedlessness which she affects, those Airs of Carelessness with which she disguises her real Sentiments, ought to convince you that, in reality, she is far from being indifferent. But your want of Assurance, the Consequences which she is very sensible ought to flow from a Passion such as yours, and the Interest she already takes in your Situation, all this intimidates the Countess herself; and you alone are the Occasion of her Constraint. A little more Forwardness on your Part, would make you both easy. Remember what M. *de la R. F. C.* lately told you : That it is not impossible for a Gentleman to be amorous like a Mad-man ; but he neither ought nor can be amorous like a Blockhead.

When you make the Comparison of your Respect and Esteem for the Countess, with the free, and almost indecent Airs of the Chevalier, you do not see with how little Justice you reason, when you conclude that you ought to be preferred to him. The Chevalier is only to be considered as a Gallant, and whatever he says is of no Importance,

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tance, or, at least, it appears to be such. This trifling Manner, and the Habit of making Love to all the fine Women who come in his Way, enables him to speak, and Love goes for nothing, or at least for very little in all his Amours. Like the Butterfly, he stops only for a Moment at each Flower; a transient Amusement is all that he wants. Such trifling is not capable of alarming a Woman. She is extremely sensible of the little Danger she is in from listening to a Man of that Character. The Countess knows very well what Value to set upon the Chevalier's Discourse: In short, she knows him to be a Man whose Heart is drained of Love. Those Women, who to hear them speak, are most upon the metaphysical Strain, know admirably well how to make a proper Distinction between a Lover of this Character, and a Man such as you. Thus you will become always more formidable, and more dreaded, from the Manner in which you declare yourself. You boast to me of your respectful Esteem for the Countess; but I am very certain, that the Case is quite otherwise; and I dare say that she is very

sensible of it. There is nothing has an Aim so little respectful, as a Passion such as yours. Quite different from the Chevalier, you require Acknowledgments, Preference, Returns, and even Sacrifices. The Countess feels all those Pretensions at once, or at least, if in the Cloud which still conceals them, she does not distinguish them very clearly, Nature gives her Surmises of what it might cost her, was she to encourage you in the least to instruct her in a Passion, which no doubt she already feels. The Women very rarely examine the Reasons which determine them either to yield or resist. They do not at all amuse themselves with examining or defining; but they feel, and the Sensation they have is just, and serves them instead of Lights and Reflection. 'Tis a kind of Instinct, which admonishes them of what is wanting, and conducts them perhaps as surely as the most enlightened Reason could do. Your beautiful *Adelaïda* wants then to enjoy herself incognito as long as she can; and this Project is very conformable to her true Interest, tho' I am fully persuaded, that it is by no means the Effect of Reflection. She

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does not see that Passion, by being outwardly constrained, only makes stronger Impressions, and greater Progress in the Mind. Let it then take deep Root, and give to this Fire, which she endeavours to conceal, Time to devour the Heart in which she wants to confine it.

Be assured further, Sir, that you are doubly deceived in your Reckoning. You believe that your Respect for the Countess is greater than that of the Chevalier; but you see, on the contrary, that these Compliments of his are without any Design; whereas you aim at no less than the Heart of your Mistress. On the other hand, you have imagined, that these careless, indifferent and inattentive Airs of hers, were Presages of your Misery. Undeceive yourself, I beseech you. There can never be a more certain Proof of a Passion, than those very Efforts which are made to conceal it. In a word, as soon as the Countess uses you in a kind Manner, whatever Proofs you may give her of your Inclination towards her; as soon, I say, as she sees you without being in a Passion, ready to make a Profession of the Love you

have for her, I tell you that her Heart is no longer her own ; she certainly loves you.

O, I had almost forgot to answer that very Article of your Letter which concerns myself. Yes, Sir, I follow constantly that Method which I laid down at the beginning of our Correspondence. There is scarce any thing in my Letters, which I have not made the Subject of Conversation among my Friends. I seldom propose to you Sentiments of any Importance, without having previously collected the Opinions of their being more or less true. Sometimes I consult *M. de la Bruiere*, and sometimes *M. de St. Evremont*; some other Time *M. de Châteauneuf* shall be my Oracle. What a deal of Honour I have ! I had it in my Power to claim all the Glory of every good Thing I write to you ; and I frankly own, that you owe it entirely to Persons who visit me. But mentioning Persons of distinguished Merit, puts me in mind that *M. de la R. F. C.* has sent a Message to me, desiring I would go and see him. I have appointed To-morrow for it, and I think you ought to be there ; you know very well how much he loves you. Adieu.

LET-

LETTER XVIII.

I Have made a good many new Reflections, Sir, upon the Situation in which you find yourself, and the Embarrassment which you still continue to be in. But after all, what Necessity is there for you to make a Declaration of Love in Form? Is it because you have read in ancient Romances, that they proceeded as regularly in Gallantry, as they did in their Courts of Justice? This is being too formal. Take my Advice, and allow, as I told you in my last, the Fire to kindle, and gain daily new Force; and you will find that, without declaring your Love, you will make a greater Progress in the Affections of your Mistress, than if you was to trouble her with open Confessions, such as our Forefathers used to tease the Women with; Confessions absolutely useless in themselves, and which always, for some Time, throw a Cloud over that Passion, and suspend the Progress of it. Remember this well, Sir; a Woman is more firmly persuaded that she is beloved, by

what she guesses herself, than by what you say to her. Behave as if you had made that Confession, which costs you so much Trouble; or imitate the Chevalier, and put on his easy Air. The Behaviour of the Countess to him before you, seems to command you to do it. With your circumspect and affected respectful Air, you appear to be a Man who meditates some considerable Design; in a word, a Man who has a Design of committing a bad Action. Your outward Behaviour gives Uneasiness to a Woman, who is no Stranger to a Passion like yours. You may be very sure, that as long as you allow her to perceive the Preparations for an Attack, you will always find her ready armed to resist it. Did you ever see an able General, who was fully determined to surprize a Place, discover to the Enemy by all his Motions, on what Part he intended the Storm should fall? In Love, as in War, do you ever ask the Conqueror, whether he owed his Success to Force, or Stratagem? He has gained the Victory, he has obtained the Crown, his Wishes are compleated, and he is happy; follow his Example, and you shall

shall share the same Fate. Conceal your March ; do not discover the Scope of your Designs, till the Enemy is not able to prevent your Success. Let the Battle be fought, and make sure of the Victory before you declare War. In a word, imitate those Heroes, whose Designs and Enterprizes are only discovered by the Ruins which they have left.

L E T T E R XIX:

AT last the Countess hears you protest that you are in Love, without taking it amiss, and swear by all that is most sacred to Lovers, that you will always continue so to do. I hope you will believe my Prophecies another time. Mean while she would use you still better, she says, if you would be but reasonable, and confine yourself to the Sentiments of Friendship only. The Name of a Lover which you assume, shocks the Delicacy of the Countess. I would not advise you to dispute about Words, provided the Thing itself be the same in the main ; and follow the Advice which *M. de la Sabliere* gives you in this Madrigal.

*Belise ne veut point d'Amant,
 Mais voudroit un ami fidèle,
 Qui pour elle eut des soins & de l'empressement.
 Et qui même la trouvât belle.
 Amans, qui soupirez pour elle,
 Sur ma parole tenez bon ;
 Belise de l'amour ne bait rien que le nom.*

*Beliza a Lover abhors,
 A Friend is the Man she admires ;
 But a Friend who her Person adores,
 And is anxious to shew his Desires.*

*Ye Lovers who sigh for the Fair,
 And dread she won't melt in Love's Flame,
 Believe me, ye need not despair,
 For of Love she hates nought but the
 Name.*

But you are grieved at her doubting of your Sincerity and Constancy. She refuses to believe you, because all Men are false and perjured ; and she refuses to love you, because they are inconstant. What a happy Man you are ! and how little is the Countess acquainted with her own Heart, if she thinks to persuade you by this of her Indifference !

Will

Will you allow me to give you the true Sense of her Discourse to you? She is touched with the Passion you discover for her; but the Complaints and Misfortunes of her Friends have convinced her, that the Protestations of Men are almost always false. But I cannot account for her Partiality in this respect; for I, who am not used to flatter them wilfully, am very well persuaded, that they are generally sincere on these Occasions. They fall in Love with a Woman; that is to say, they entertain strong Desires of possessing her. The enchanting Ideas which they conceive of this Possession, seduces them. They imagine that these Pleasures which they attach to it, will never have an End; not considering, that the Fire which devours them, may some Time or other grow weak, and become quite extinct: But this appears to them to be absolutely impossible. Thus they swear to us sincerely, that they will never cease to love us; and to question it, is to do them a great Piece of Injustice. Mean while, they promise more than they are able to perform. They are ignorant, that their Heart is formed in such

a manner, as not to be always satisfied with the same Object : They cease to love, without knowing why. They even make a Doubt of their Passions being cold, and continue saying a long Time, that they love, after it is really over. They tease themselves to no Effect ; and after having tormented themselves sufficiently, they yield to Disgust, and become inconstant as sincerely, as they before protested that they would never change. There is nothing in the World more easily accounted for. That Fermentation, which a growing Passion had excited in their Breasts, was the Charm which seduced them ; but as soon as the Enchantment is dissipated, Coldness succeeds. To what can we impute these Fluctuations ? They believed themselves able to keep their Word. But how many Women find themselves very happy, from their Lovers giving a free Career to their Fickleness.

However it be, the Countess finds Fault with you for the Inconstancy of others in your Situation ; and she is afraid, lest you resemble other Lovers. Ready to yield to you upon the least Encouragement, she de-

sires

fires nothing but Reasons to believe you sincere. The Love then, which you swear to her, does not at all offend her. What do I say? offend her; on the contrary, it charms her. She is so delighted with it, that she fears it is not sincere. Dissipate those Alarms; shew her that the Happiness which you offer her, and of which she already knows well the Value, is not imaginary. Nay farther, persuade her that she shall enjoy it for ever, and she will no longer resist you; her Doubts will be dissipated, and she will eagerly catch at every thing that is able to remove her Suspicions and Disquiet. She would have believed you before, and you would have prevailed upon her to yield to the Pleasure of being beloved, if she had thought that she really was so, and that it was always to continue. The Women are much mistaken, if by their Fears and Doubts of the Sincerity and Constancy of the Men, they imagine they can make them believe that they shun or neglect their Love. As soon as they are afraid that you are deceiving them, by making them hope to enjoy those Pleasures; as soon as they are afraid, that they will not enjoy

joy them long ; they are then become sensible of all their Charms, and nothing disquiets them, but the Fear of being too soon deprived of them. Tortured with this Fear, and the violent Inclination which they have to Pleasure, they hesitate, and tremble at their having enjoyed it long enough to make the Privation of it extremely painful to them. Thus, Sir, you may imagine that every Woman, who speaks to you in the Language of the Countess, expresses herself to you after this manner : I very well conceive all the Delights and Pleasures of Love, and the Idea which I have formed of it is very ensnaring. Do you believe, that in my Heart I desire less than you to enjoy all its Charms ? But the more, my Imagination is ravished with the Idea, the more am I afraid that it is only a beautiful Chimera ; and nothing but the Fear of seeing my Happiness too soon terminated, hinders me to yield to it. Oh, if I might but hope that my Happiness would be durable, how feeble, in that Case, would be my Resistance ! But will not you make a bad Use of my Credulity ? Will not you punish me some Time

or

or other, for having put too much Confidence in you? and will it not be shortly? Ah! if I could but hope to reap, for any considerable Time, the Fruit of that Sacrifice which I would make to you of my Repose, I frankly own to you, that I should soon consent.

L E T T E R XX.

YOUR Rival appears to me to be so much the more formidable, as he is such a Man as I advised you to be. I am no Stranger to the Chevalier, and there is none more capable than he of seducing the Fair Sex. I could lay a Wager, that his Heart is not so much as touched. He attacks the Countess in cold Blood; and you are certainly undone. A Lover so passionate as you seem to be, is guilty of a hundred Blunders; the finest Opportunities in the World are thrown away upon him. He lays himself open every Moment; nay, such is his Misfortune, that his Precipitation and Timidity hurt him by Turns. He loses a thousand of those little Occasions, which, if
rightly

rightly improved, might be turned to Advantage. He, on the contrary, who makes Love only for the Pleasure of making it, lays hold of all Advantages that offer; nothing escapes him. He observes the Progress they make in Love; he knows their weak Side, and immediately makes his Attack there. Every thing conspires to crown his Purpose; even his Inadvertencies are frequently the Fruit of the soundest Reflection, they forward his Success, and at last he acquires such a Superiority, that he may date, if I may say so, the very Day of his Triumph.

Beware, Sir, of making all the Advances yourself; do not shew so much Love as to make the Countess at all assured of the Excess of your Passion. Give her some gentle Disquiets, and oblige her to be at some Pains to preserve your Affection for her, by making her at proper Times afraid of losing you. No Woman will treat you more slightly, than one who is persuaded that you are too much in Love to leave her. Her Virtue renders her intractable less than her Pride. Like a Merchant whose Goods you
have

have too freely commended, she imposes upon you with very little Discretion. Curb then that imprudent Vivacity of yours; shew less Passion on your Part, and you will excite more on hers. We are never sensible of the Value of a good Thing, till we are going to lose it. A little Gallantry in Love is absolutely requisite for the Happiness of both Parties. Nay, perhaps I shall go the Length, if I find a Necessity for it, to advise you to become a little wicked. Upon every other Occasion, it were better, doubtless, to be a Dupe than a Rogue; but in Gallantry Fools only are Dupes, and the Rogues have always the Laugh on their Side. Adieu.

Mean while I cannot prevail upon myself to leave you, without giving you a Word at least of Consolation. I must not discourage you, and however formidable the Chevalier may appear to you, I do not think you have any great Reason to be troubled about it. I suspect that the artful Countess has only admitted his Addresses, in order to give you Uneasiness. It is not that I have the least Inclination to flatter you; but I am very
glad

glad to tell you, that you are worth a thousand of him. You are young, and just entering into the World, and they look upon you as a Person who has not yet been in Love. The Chevalier, on the contrary, has been used to Intrigues; and where is there a Woman, who is not sensible of the Difference?

LETTER XXI.

YOU talk of Integrity in Love, Sir, do you? Ah! you are over Head and Ears, upon my Word. I must take care not to shew your Letter, lest you should thereby be affronted. You would not for the World, you say, enter upon the Intrigue I advised you to. Your Integrity and high Sentiments would have made your Fortune formerly, when they treated Love as an Affair of Honour; but at present, as the Corruption of the Age has changed every thing, Love is no more than a Sally of Humour and Vanity. Your want of Experience gives your Virtue a Stiffness, which would infallibly ruin you, if you had not good Sense enough to comply at last with
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the Manners of the Times. It is not the Fashion at present to appear what one really is. All is Grimace ; we are satisfied with Airs, outward Forms, and Appearances. 'Tis all a Comedy ; and the Men have very good Reason for using us in the Manner they do. They have discovered that neither Party would be a Gainer, if they told us both the Good and Bad that they think of us. They have therefore agreed to substitute, instead of this Sincerity, Phrases which are quite the reverse ; and this manner of acting has, by Contagion as it were, introduced itself into Gallantry. In spite of your high Principles, you will agree, that when this Behaviour, which is called Politeness, is neither pushed the Length of Irony nor Falshood, 'tis a social Virtue to follow it ; and of all Intercourses, that of Gallantry is the one in which there is the most need to put on a false Appearance. How many Occasions are there, when a Lover gains as much by dissembling the Excess of his Passion, as on others by feigning more than he feels. I guess at the Countess's Character ; she is more artful than you. I
am

am certain that she dissembles her Inclination for you, with as much Care, as you take in multiplying the Proofs of yours for her. I repeat it to you again; the less you betray your Passion at present, the better you will be used. Teaze her in your Turn; make her afraid of losing you, and you will soon see her more complying. 'Tis the most certain Method of knowing the true Rank you hold in her Affections.

L E T T E R XXII.

WHAT, not a single Word from you during ten whole Days! No wonder so long a Silence should have made me uneasy. The Trial then which you have made of my Advice, you have found successful; and I wish you Joy of it. But there is one thing which I do not at all approve of, which is your being out of Humour at the Countess's refusing to make a Declaration. The *I love you*, is then very precious in your Eyes. You have been endeavouring this Fortnight past to penetrate into the Sentiments of the Countess, and
have

have succeeded. You know her Inclination towards you : What would you have more ? What farther Right would her Declaration give you over her Heart ? Upon my word, I find something very singular in your Temper ; for you must know, that there is nothing more ready to provoke a reasonable Woman ; than that Obstinacy with which most Men demand a Confession which she refuses to make. I do not understand what you would be at. In the Eyes of a delicate Lover, ought not this Refusal to be a thousand Times more becoming, than a positive Declaration ? Do you desire to be made sensible of your real Interest ? Far from persecuting a Woman upon this Head, strive, as I told you before, to conceal from her the Progress of her Inclination towards you. Make her love you before you make her sensible of that Progress, and before you put her to the Necessity of avowing it to herself. And is it possible there can be a more delightful Situation, than that of seeing a Heart engaged in your Favour without suspecting it, growing warm by Degrees, and at last quite melted ? What Pleasure

must

must it give you to enjoy in private all these Emotions, to direct, increase and hasten them to a Crisis, and to congratulate yourself upon the Victory, before your Mistress has suspected that you have attempted her Defeat? Let me advise you, Sir, to behave to the Countess in the same manner, as if the Declaration had escaped her. It is certain she will never say positively, *I love you*; but it is because she loves you, that she will not tell you so: She will do every thing besides that is requisite to persuade you of it.

The Women find themselves under no small Embarrassment. They are at least as desirous of owning to you their Inclinations, as you are of instructing them in it. But what would you have, Sir? The Men, who are very industrious in making Fetters for themselves, have attached Shame to the Declaration which we would make of our Passion; and whatever Ideas they may form to themselves of our manner of thinking, this Declaration is always mortifying to us; for how ever little Experience we have, we feel all the Consequences of it. The *I love you* has, of itself, nothing criminal in it; but the

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Consequences of it frightens us. What Method is there to be fallen upon to conceal them from us, and to hide from our Eyes those Engagements which necessarily follow such a Confession?

I advise you further to take care what you are about; your Obstinacy in demanding such a Confession, is less the Effect of Love than of Vanity; and I defy you to impose upon us, as to the true Motives of your Importunity. Nature has endued us with an admirable Instinct, which makes us distinguish justly whatever is owing to Passion, from that which arises from a different Source. Always indulgent with regard to the Effects which are produced by a Passion we have inspired, we pardon those Imprudences, little Transports, and all those Follies which you Lovers are capable of; but you will ever find us untractable, when our Self-love encounters yours. Who would believe it? you disoblige us in Things which have not the least Tendency to make you happy. Your Vanity is occupied about Trifles, and hinders you from enjoying real Advantages. Will you believe me when I tell it
you?

you? You will give up this curious Whim of amusing yourself with the Certainty of being beloved by an adorable Woman, in order to taste the Pleasure of concealing it from her, to take the Advantage of her Security. What will you gain, if by means of Importunities you should force out an *I love you*? Will that put an End to your Uncertainty? Will you be thoroughly persuaded, that you do not owe it more to Complaisance than to Love? I think I ought to know the Women pretty well: They may deceive you by an artful Confession, which the Lips only pronounce; but they can never do it by the involuntary Tokens of a Passion which they endeavour to conceal. In a word, flattering Confessions are not properly made by us, they only escape us.

LETTER XXIII.

PARDON me, Sir, for laughing at your Distress. I find you lay Things exceedingly to Heart. Some Imprudences which you have committed, you tell me, have brought upon you the Displeasure of the

the Countess, and you are extremely uneasy at it. You kiss'd her Hand it seems with a Transport, which every body took Notice of; she reproached you publickly for your Indiscretion; and the singular Regard you discovered for her, which never fails to offend the rest of the Sex, has expos'd you to the satirical Raillery of the Marchioness her Sister-in-Law. These are very terrible Events, to be sure. But pray, are you simple enough to think yourself ruined without Resource, only from the outward Show of a feigned Fit of Anger, without ever dreaming that she justified you in her own Mind? It is my Business then to convince you of it; and in order to this, I find I shall be obliged to reveal to you strange Mysteries with regard to our Sex. But after all, I do not mean in writing to you, always to make an Apology for the Women. All you can desire of me is, to express myself without Reserve. This I have promised to do, and I will keep my Word with you.

A Woman is always disturbed by two irreconcilable Passions, *viz.* The Desire of pleasing, and the Fear of Shame. Think

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how

how we are embarrassed; on the one hand, burning with the Desire of having our Charms adored, wholly taken up with gaining Admirers, and ravished at finding Opportunities of mortifying other Women, we strive to render them Witnesses of the Preference which we obtain, and all the Homage which is paid us by the Men. Do you know the Bounds of our Desires in this Case? The Ruin of our Rivals. Those Indiscretions which discover the Passions we inspire, charm us in Proportion to their Despair. In short, Inadvertencies of that Kind, which you have committed, persuade us much more that you really love us, than a Circumspection which is incapable of rendering our Charms celebrated.

But how are these delicious Pleasures embittered? They are attended with the Malice of our Rivals, and sometimes with Contempt from you. A strange Fatality ruins us. The World does not know the Difference betwixt those Women who permit you to love them, and those who reward your Love. A sensible Woman, when she is alone, and in cold Blood, would always prefer

prefer a good Reputation, to that of being celebrated. But place her only in Company with Rivals, who are able to dispute the Prize of Beauty with her, tho' she should lose this Reputation, of which she seemed so jealous, and tho' you should offer to compromise the Affair with her a thousand Times, nothing with her is equal to the Pleasure of seeing herself preferred. She will soon reward you, by giving you Proofs of her Esteem; and she will at first imagine, that they flow only from Gratitude; but they will be certain Signs of her Attachment to you. We are afraid of appearing ungrateful, and thereby become tender. It is not then your Indiscretions that trouble us. If we appear to be hurt by them, we must expect to suffer for discovering it, and you would be the first in finding Fault with an excessive Indulgence afterwards. But be sure you do not mistake the Point. Not to trouble us upon these Occasions, would be really offending us. We recommend to you Discretion and Prudence. Is not this the Part which we have to act? Is there any Occasion for us to tell you yours? It has

frequently been repeated to me, that to take the Laws literally, was not to understand them. You cannot fail in fulfilling our Intentions, as soon as you know how to interpret them.

L E T T E R XXIV.

IS it come then to a flying Fight with the Countess? And do you believe that she has no other Intention at present than to try you? Whatever Preference you shew to her, and however little Precaution you observe in giving Proofs of your Passion to her, she has now, it seems, no more Power to find fault with it. The least Excuse you make, silences her Reproaches; and her Anger is so becoming, that you do all you can to provoke it. I partake with you very heartily in the Joy which such Success gives you. But however these little Disputes may please you, if you like them, take care that they be not too lasting. How ill do sensible Women, and such as would take care of their Reputation, understand their true Interest, in thus multiplying, by an affected

Incre-

Incredulity, the Opportunities of traducing them. Will they never be sensible, that it is not always their tender Moments which cast a Blemish on their Reputation? The Doubts which they affect of the Sincerity of the Passion which they have inspired, hurts them more in the Eyes of the World, than even their Defeat itself. As long as they remain incredulous, they expose themselves by a thousand Imprudences. They dispose of their Reputations by retail. As long as the Lover finds them doubtful of the Sincerity of his Passion, he spares nothing, when he finds an Opportunity, of giving them Proofs of his Sincerity. The most unguarded Eagerness, the most evident Marks of Esteem, and the most earnest Anxiety to please, appear to him to be the best Methods of succeeding. And can all this pass without being observed by every Body, without all the rest of the Sex being offended, and without their revenging themselves by the most spiteful Reflections? As soon as the Preliminaries are settled, that is, as soon as we begin to believe ourselves sincerely beloved, nothing appears externally, nothing

transpires; and if our Passion is discovered, if the Imposition is found out, it is only by calling to mind what passed at a Time, when Love made little Progress. I would therefore advise, for the Good of both Parties, that whenever a Woman finds no Inclination towards her Lover, she should never abuse his Credulity, and without entertaining him with vain Hopes, should frankly give him his Leave. But at the same time I would have her, when she is certain that she loves him, to let him know it honestly; allowing her, however, to suffer herself to be importuned as much as she thinks proper, before she will own that she has as great a Passion for her Lover as he has for her. For, in a word, it is impossible for her to affect Doubts, without putting him to the Necessity of removing them; and this he cannot do successfully, without letting the World into the Secret, by the earnest Devotion which he pays her.

These Ideas, I am very sensible, could not have been proposed at a Time, when the bad Address of the Men rendered a great many Women untractable; but at present, when

when the Boldness of the Assailants leaves us so little Resource; now that it is sufficiently proved, that since the Invention of Powder there is no Place impregnable, why should they expose themselves to the Tediouſness of a Siege in Form, when it is certain, that after a deal of Labour, and a Number of Disasters, they must at last capitulate? Make then proper Remonstrances to your amiable Countess, and shew her the Inconveniencies of distrusting your Affection for her any longer. Thereby you will convince her of your Passion, and oblige her to believe you, from the Care she ought to take of her own Reputation; and, perhaps, still more, by supplying her with a further Reason for putting a Confidence in you, which, no doubt, she has a great deal of Pain to refuse you.

LETTER XXV.

IT seems then that my last Letter has offended you ; and you are very earnest in asserting, that it is not at all impossible to find virtuous Women in the Age we live in. Pray, Sir, did I ever assert to you the contrary ? In comparing Women to Places that are attacked, have I advanced that there were no Towns which had never been taken ? Nay, how could I say this, when there are some which never were besieged ? You see then that I am of your Opinion ; but I explain myself in the mean time, in order that you may not cavil with me any more. My Confession of Faith on this Head is as follows : I believe firmly, that Women remain virtuous, in case they have never been attacked ; or supposing the Attack has been ill carried on. I believe likewise in some Women remaining virtuous, tho' they have been attacked, and that vigorously, provided they have neither a Constitution for Love, nor a violent Passion, nor the Liberty of making a Choice, nor a hateful Husband.

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I am strongly prompted, upon this Occasion, to communicate to you a warm Conversation, which I once had on this Subject, when I was but very young, with a Prude, whom a remarkable Intrigue had obliged to throw off the Mask. At that Time I was quite void of Experience, and judged of others with that Severity, which is natural to us, till some of our own Failings have made us more good-natured in excusing those of our Neighbours. I had taken it into my Head to reproach the Conduct of this Woman without any Reserve ; and this she knew very well. As I used to see her sometimes at one of my Relations, one Day she took me aside, and spoke to me as follows ; and indeed it made so strong an Impression upon my Mind, that I have remembered it ever since.

“ It is not with a Design to reproach you,” said she, “ with those Reflections which you have thrown out upon me, that I want to speak to you alone ; it is in order to give you some Advices, the Solidity of which you will be sensible of some Time

“ or other. You blame my Conduct with
“ a Severity, and look upon me with a Dis-
“ dain, which very plainly informs me how
“ proud you are that you have never yet
“ suffered any one to take the Advantage
“ of you. You think you have Virtue, and
“ that this Virtue will never leave you.
“ These, my dear Child, are only the mere
“ Illusions of your own Self-love. I think
“ myself obliged to enlighten your Inexpe-
“ rience, and to make you sensible, that
“ far from being secure of this Virtue,
“ which renders you so severe, you cannot
“ so much as be sure that you really have
“ it. This Speech surprizes you; but be
“ only attentive, and you will very soon af-
“ fect to the Truth of what I say.

“ No body hitherto has talked to you of
“ Love. Your Mirror alone has told you
“ that you are handsome. Your Heart, I
“ can well see, by the Air of Indifference
“ in every thing about you, has not yet
“ unfolded itself. The loud Voice of Na-
“ ture has not yet reached your Ear; (but
“ there she was deceived.) “ As long as you
“ remain in this Situation, as long as your
“ Parents

“ Parents keep a constant Eye upon you,
“ as they do at present, I can answer for
“ your Safety. But when the Heart comes
“ to declare itself; when these Eyes, en-
“ chanting in themselves, shall have received
“ the Spirit and Expression of the Passions,
“ and speak the Language of Love, and an
“ inward Disquietude shall disturb you; in
“ short, when Desires, half extinguished by
“ the Scruples of a good Education, shall
“ have made you blush several Times in
“ secret; then your Sensibility, and the
“ Struggles you will have to overcome it,
“ will diminish your Severity against others,
“ and their Faults will appear more excusa-
“ ble to you. The Sense of your own
“ Weakness will not permit you any more
“ to look upon your Virtue as invincible.
“ But what will still be more surprising to
“ you, the little Assistance it will give you
“ against a Passion too impetuous for it,
“ will make you doubt of your ever having
“ had it Can we be sure that a Man
“ is brave, who never has fought? It is
“ the same thing with us. The Attacks
“ which are made upon us, give alone a

“ Being to our Virtue, as Danger does to
“ Valour. As long as we have never seen
“ the Enemy, we remain ignorant how
“ formidable he is, and what Degree of Re-
“ sistance we shall be able to make to him.

“ Thus, before a Woman can flatter her-
“ self that she is thoroughly virtuous and
“ wise of herself, it is necessary that no
“ Danger, however great ; no Motive,
“ however pressing ; and no Pretence what-
“ ever, should be able to make her yield.
“ The most favourable Opportunity, the
“ most tender Love, the Certainty of Se-
“ crecy, the most perfect Esteem and Con-
“ fidence in him who makes the Attack ;
“ in short, all these Circumstances put to-
“ gether, must not be able to stagger her
“ Resolution. So that, in order to be sa-
“ tisfied whether a Woman be virtuous, in
“ the true Signification of the Word, we
“ must suppose her to have escaped all those
“ Dangers united ; for it would be nothing
“ at all for her to have resisted, either Love,
“ without having an amorous Constitution ;
“ or the Opportunity, without being in
“ Love ; or an amorous Inclination, with-
“ out

“ out the Opportunity. Her Virtue will
 “ always be doubtful, as long as it has not
 “ been attacked with all the Arms that can
 “ possibly be brought against it at once ;
 “ for it may always be objected, that if she
 “ had been of another Constitution, she
 “ would not have resisted Love ; or if a
 “ favourable Opportunity had offered, her
 “ Virtue would have been foiled.”

“ At this Rate,” answered I, “ there has
 “ never been a virtuous Woman in the
 “ World ; and I do not believe there is any
 “ one to be found, who has combatted so
 “ many Enemies at one Time.” “ That
 “ may be,” replied she ; “ but do you know
 “ the Reason of it ? ’Tis because there is
 “ no need for so many to overcome us ; one
 “ alone of those Enemies is sufficient to
 “ succeed.”

I proceeded ; you alledge then that our
 Virtue does not depend upon us, but upon
 Opportunity, and other Causes foreign to
 our Will.

“ Without doubt,” replied she. “ Let me
 “ only ask you, are you capable of giving
 “ yourself a lively or a quiet Temper ? Are

„ you

“ you capable of defending yourself from
“ a violent Passion? Does it depend upon
“ you to dispose all the Circumstances of
“ your Life in such a manner, as never to
“ find yourself alone with a Lover whom
“ you will have the greatest Affection for,
“ who will know the Advantages he has
“ over you, and make the best Use of them?
“ In a word, is it in your Power to hinder
“ his Addresses, even innocent at first, to
“ produce on your Senses the Impression
“ which they necessarily ought to make
“ there? Surely no. To argue the con-
“ trary, would be as much as to say, that
“ Iron is capable of resisting the Loadstone.
“ And yet you alledge, that your Virtue is
“ entirely of your own creating; and at-
“ tribute to yourself the Glory of a Talent,
“ which you may be deprived of every
“ Moment. The Virtue of Women, like
“ all other good Things we enjoy, is the
“ Gift of Heaven, and a Favour which
“ Heaven might refuse us. Think then
“ how unreasonable you are to boast of it.
“ Consider your Injustice, in treating so
“ cruelly those, who have had the Misfor-

“ tune

“ tune of bringing into the World an in-
“ superable Inclination to Love, whom a
“ violent Passion has subdued, or who have
“ been surpris’d in these unfortunate Mo-
“ ments, when you would not have escaped
“ with more Glory than they.

“ Allow me to give you another Proof of
“ the Justness of my Ideas; and this shall
“ be drawn from your own Conduct. Are
“ not you thoroughly persuad’d, that every
“ Woman, who chuses to remain virtuous,
“ ought to avoid exposing herself to any
“ Temptation to the contrary? That she
“ ought to watch herself very strictly in the
“ least Trifles, because you are satisfied that
“ they tend to introduce things of greater
“ Importance? It is much safer for you to
“ prevent in Men the Desire of attacking
“ you, by affecting an outward Severity,
“ than to defend yourself against their At-
“ tacks. As a Proof of what I say, do
“ not they breed up young Misses under
“ the greatest Restraint possible in that re-
“ spect? Nay, they do more: A prudent
“ Mother trusts neither to the Principles of
“ her Daughter, nor the Fear of Dishonour,

“ nor

“ nor the bad Idea she gives her of the
“ Men, but keeps her always in Sight;
“ whereby she renders it impossible for her
“ to fall into a Snare. And what is the
“ Reason of all these Precautions? Because
“ the Mother is afraid of the Weakness of
“ her Daughter, if she exposes her only for
“ a Moment to Danger. And yet, in spite
“ of all the Obstacles with which she is
“ surrounded, how often does it happen
“ that Love gets the better? A Girl who
“ is well educated, or, to speak more pro-
“ perly, who is well guarded, becomes proud
“ of her Virtue, because she imagines that
“ she owes it entirely to herself; but it is
“ almost always a Slave which is chained
“ very fast, and would have you think
“ yourself obliged to him, because he does
“ not run away. And, indeed, in what
“ Class do you find those Girls who are
“ ruined? In that in which they are not so
“ rich, or so happy, as to be constantly sur-
“ rounded with all those Obstacles which
“ have saved you. In that, where the Men
“ have attacked them more briskly, more
“ eagerly, more frequently, and conse-
“ quently

"quently with all kinds of Advantages.
 "In that, where the Impressions of Educa-
 "tion, Example, Pride, and the Desire of
 "a happy Settlement, did not support them.
 "Had your Birth been a little lower, you
 "might have become such a one as the Wo-
 "man you look upon with so much Dis-
 "dain. And in spite of all the borrowed
 "Assistance which supports this Virtue of
 "which you are so vain, in a few Days,
 "perhaps, you would be more despicable
 "than she, because you have had it more
 "in your Power to guard yourself against
 "this Misfortune. I do not, however, de-
 "fire to deprive you of the Merit of your
 "Virtue, in order to hinder you from re-
 "maining attached to it, by convincing you
 "of your Weakness. I only want to squeeze
 "out of you a little Indulgence for those,
 "whom a too impetuous Passion, or
 "unfortunate Circumstances, have plunged
 "into a Situation so mortifying to them-
 "selves. My only Intention is to make
 "you sensible, that you ought to be less
 "vain of possessing an Advantage, which
 "is not of your own acquiring, and which
 "you

“ you may, perhaps, be deprived of To-morrow.”

She was going to proceed, but some body interrupted us. Soon after, my own Experience made me sensible, that I ought not to entertain so good an Opinion of a great many Virtues which had been imposed upon me before, beginning with my own.

LETTER XXVI.

I AM entirely of your Opinion, that tho' these Ideas I communicated to you Yesterday, appear to be true in Speculation, it would be dangerous, however, for all Women to allow themselves to be persuaded of the Truth of them. It is not a Conviction of their Weakness that will keep them virtuous, but a full Persuasion that they are free, and at liberty either to yield or resist. It is not by persuading a Soldier that he will be conquer'd, that you excite his Courage to fight. But did not you take Notice, that she who spoke in my Letter, had a personal Interest in causing her System to be received? It is true, that on examining these Reason

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philosophically, they appear at least specious; but it might very much be feared, that if we should allow ourselves thus to reason on what Virtue is, we might at last make Problems of Rules, which we ought to receive and practise in the manner of a Law which it is criminal to examine. And besides, to persuade the Women that it is not to themselves that they owe their Virtue, would not this be depriving them of the most powerful Motive to preserve it; I mean the Persuasion, that is their own Work which they defend? Discouragement would be the Consequence of such a Moral; and besides, it would scarce answer any Purpose, but to diminish, in the Eyes of a vicious Woman, the Guilt of those Excursions which she has indulged herself in. But let us proceed to Affairs, in which you are more nearly concerned.

At last, after a great many Doubts, and a Number of Revolutions, you are certain you are beloved. You have worked up the Countess to a Tenderness, when she could no longer keep it a Secret. She has pronounced the Word which you longed so violently

lently to hear. Nay further, a thousand involuntary Testimonies of that Passion which you have inspired her with, have now escaped her. The Certainty of being beloved, far from diminishing your Passion, has increased it; and, in short, you are the happiest Man in the World. If you knew with how much Pleasure I share in your good Fortune, it would be an Addition to it. The first Sacrifice which she was willing to make to you, was to discard the Chevalier, which, you tell me, you opposed; and you was certainly in the right. That would have been exposing the Countess to no Purpose; and this puts me in Mind, that in general, the Women lose themselves much more frequently by their Inadvertencies, than by real Errors. The Confidence you have placed in her, by so noble a Behaviour, must touch her very sensibly. All this is as well as one could wish. But allow me to tell you, that the Turn which this Affair takes, begins to alarm me. We had agreed, if you remember, to treat Love a little cavalierly. You was at most to have only a very gentle Touch of it, and you was not to allow it to go the
Length

Length of a Passion in Form. But I find that every Day Things grow more and more serious; and you treat Love with a Dignity which makes me uneasy. The Sense of true Merit, great Qualities, and a good Character, enter into the Motives of your Amour, and unite themselves to the personal Charms of your Mistress, to make you desperately in Love. I am not fond that so much Esteem should mix itself with an Affair of mere Gallantry. It does not leave us enough at liberty, and makes Love a Business instead of an Amusement. I shall even be afraid, that, at last, your Intrigue will take a grave and precise Turn. But, perhaps, you will too soon have fresh Claims upon her, and the Countess by new Quarrels will doubtless revive your Passion. Too lasting a Peace, would make it intolerably irksome. Love is destroyed by want of Variety: For as soon as Formality is introduced into an Intrigue, the Passion disappears, a Languor succeeds, which is followed by Insipidity, and Disgust terminates the whole.

LETTER XXVII.

IT seems then that *Madam de Sevigné* is not of my Opinion, with regard to the Causes of Love. She alledges, that a Number of Women are only acquainted with its fairest Side, and that the Senses have nothing to do in their Amours. According to her, tho' what I call my *System* was actually established, it would always appear ill-placed in the Mouth of a Woman, and might be productive of bad Consequences with regard to their Morals.

These Reflections are serious enough, I confess; but are they well founded? I do not believe it. It grieves to me to see, that *Madam de Sevigné* has not read my Letters in the Spirit in which they were writ. To talk of my Systems! Upon my Word she does me a great deal of Honour; for I could never yet apply sufficiently to compose any. I further imagine, that a System is nothing else than a philosophical Dream. Is it possible, that she could look upon all I have said to you as a Flight of Imagination? In this case, we are far enough from coming to a Reckoning. I do not imagine Things;
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I paint real Objects. I want to establish a certain Truth; and in order to succeed in it, my Design is not at all to surprize the Fancy, I apply to the Sense. Perhaps she has been struck with the Singularity of some of my Propositions, which appeared so evident to me, that I have not been at the Pains to prove them. But is it necessary to make use of a Geometrical Exactness, in order to discover the just Quantity of Truth in a Maxim of Gallantry?

Besides, I am so much afraid of formal Debates, that I should be very willing to submit. Madam *de Sevigné*, you tell me, knows a Number of Female Metaphysicians: Very well. I grant her these Exceptions, provided she only allows my Thesis in general to be true. I shall even own, if you require it, that there really exist some Minds which we may call privileged; for I have never heard the Virtues of Constitution denied. To Women of this Stamp, likewise, I have nothing to say. I do not criticise them, nor have I any Fault to lay to their Charge; but in the mean time, as I do not think it my Duty to praise them, I shall
content

content myself with only wishing them Joy. Mean while, if you examine them, you will be convinced of the Truth of what I advanced in one of my first Letters to you ; that the Heart must be filled. If Nature does not prompt them at all, or at least not more to Gallantry, their Affections only change the Object. Such a Person appears insensible to Love at present, only because she has disposed of all that Portion of Passion which she had to bestow upon it. They say the Count *du Lude* has not always been looked upon with an indifferent Eye by *Madam de Sevigné* ; but an extreme Tenderness for *Madam de Grignan* occupies her Heart at present.

Further, according to her, I am, it seems, very partial with regard to the Women. I ought, out of Charity, to have concealed those Faults I have discovered in my Sex ; or, if you please, which my Sex have made me discover in myself. But do you actually believe, Sir, that if all that I have said upon that Subject should be made public, the Women would be offended at it ? I would have you to know them better : on

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the contrary, they would certainly find their Account in it. And, in effect, to tell them, that it is by a mechanical Instinct that they are prompted to Gallantry, is not this placing them entirely at their Ease? Is not this endeavouring to restore the Credit of that Fatality, and those Acts of Sympathy, which they are so ready to alledge as Excuses for their Failings, and in which, as you may observe, I place so little Faith? In affirming that Love is the Work of Reflection, you do not consider the Blow that you give to their Vanity; you thereby render them responsible for their good and bad Choice. Further, Sir; I am not in the wrong, when I say, that all the Women would be pleased with my Letters. The female Metaphysicians, that is to say, those whom Heaven has favoured with a happy Constitution, would observe there with Pleasure their Superiority over the rest. They would not fail to congratulate themselves upon the Delicacy of their Sentiments, and look upon it as their own Production. Those again whom Nature has formed of a coarser Mold, would doubtless think that they owed me

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some Acknowledgments, for having revealed to them a Mystery, which lay heavy at their Hearts. It has been made a Duty incumbent upon them to dissemble their Inclination; and they are as attentive not to be wanting in this, as they are careful not to allow it to abstract from their Pleasures. It is their Interest then, that these Inclinations should be discovered, without their having any hand in it. Whoever then will be at the Pains to display their Hearts, will render them a very particular Service. And I am very well convinced, that they, who at the bottom have Sentiments the most conformable to mine, will be the first in doing themselves the Honour of struggling against them. Thus I should make my Court to them in two different Ways, equally agreeable to them; by adapting those Maxims which flatter their Inclinations, and by supplying them with an Opportunity of appearing delicate.

After all, Sir, you are of Opinion then, that a Person ought to know the Women very well, to suspect that they should be offended at the Aspersions which I have cast
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upon them. It is an old Saying, That they would much rather chuse that you should speak a little ill of them, than that you should not speak of them at all. You see then, that even supposing I had wrote to you with that Intention which they alledge, the Women would be far from reproaching me for it.

In short, Madam *Sevigné* is afraid that my System may possibly be made a Precedent. Upon my Word, Sir, I am at a Loss to comprehend how, with that good Sense which she is Mistress of, she could entertain an Opinion of this Kind. By robbing Love in the manner I have done, of every thing which could seduce you, and examining it as the Effect of Constitution, Caprice and Vanity; by exposing to you, in a word, all that Excellence and Dignity which Metaphysics has bestowed on it, is it not evident, that I have thereby rendered it less dangerous? And would it not be much more so, if, according to what Madam *de Sevigné* alledges, it was exalted to a Virtue? I would beg Leave to compare my Opinion with that of the famous Legislator of Antiquity,

tiquity, who thought he could not weaken the Power of the Women over his Fellow-Citizens but by exposing their Nakedness. But I am willing to strain Things to the last in your Favour : and seeing they take me for a systematical Woman, I look upon myself as obliged to endeavour to deserve so high a Title. Allow us then to reason a little seriously upon Gallantry.

Is not Love a Passion ? Do not your Moralists alledge, that Passions and Vices signify the same thing ? Is Vice ever more seducing, than when it puts on the external Appearance of Virtue ? It ought then never to be represented, but in a Form capable of giving virtuous Minds an Aversion to it. Was it not with this Intention, that the *Platonists* deified it ? And in all Ages, in order to justify the Passions, have they not made Divinities of them ? But what is it that I do ? I venture to decry the favourite Superstition ; I break down the Idol. What Rashness is this ! Ought not I to expect to be persecuted by the Women, whose darling Worship I have had the Assurance to attack ?

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I am sorry for it, upon their Accounts. It was a fine thing, when they felt the Impressions of Love, to be exempted from blushing at it; nay, even to be at Liberty to applaud it, and lay all the Blame on the Power of the Deity. But what had poor Humanity done to disoblige them? Why should we despise it, and go to Heaven in search of the Cause of our Weaknesses, when we may find it here below, the proper Place of its Residence?

To tell the Truth, however, I have not declaimed openly in my Letters against Love; neither have I advised you to have nothing to do with it. I was too firmly persuaded of the Uselessness of such an Advice; but I have told you what Love really is, and thereby diminished the Illusion, and hindered it from imposing upon you so much; at least, I have weakened its Power over you, and Experience will justify me in what I have done.

I know perfectly well, that they use a quite different Method in the Education of Women. And what Fruit do they reap from it? They begin by deceiving them.

They strive to impress upon them the same Fear of Love, as of Spirits. They paint all Men to them as Monsters of Infidelity and Perfidiousness. But let us suppose a handsome young Man to present himself; one who discovers delicate Sentiments, and puts on a modest and respectful Air: The young Lady, who has been instructed in the manner abovementioned, will certainly imagine that they have been deceiving her; and as soon as she finds that they have aggravated Matters to her, they who advised her will lose all their Credit with her. Ask her, and she will tell you, provided she is sincere, that those Sentiments, which that Monster has excited in her Heart, are quite of a different Stamp from those of Horror.

They impose upon them besides, in another manner; and the Misfortune is, that they can scarce act otherwise. They are at an infinite deal of Pains to avoid giving them Warning, or even allowing them to foresee that they will be attacked by the Senses, and that these Attacks will be the most dangerous for them. They speak to them always on a Supposition that they are down-right

right Angels. And what is the Consequence of all this? As they are not in the least forewarned of the manner of the Attack which they are to resist, they find themselves quite defenceless. They never dreamt, that their most formidable Enemy was one which had never been once mentioned to them; and how is it possible that they should be on their Guard against him? It is not then the Men which they ought to be made afraid of, but of themselves. Alas! what would a Lover be able to do, if the Fair-one whom he attacks was not seduced by her own Desires?

Thus, Sir, when I tell the Women, that the principal Cause of their Weakness is physical, I am far from advising them to follow this Inclination; on the contrary, my Intention is to caution them against it. 'Tis the same as telling the Governor of a Place, that the Attack will not be made upon that Part which he has been at the Pains to fortify; and that the Assault which is most to be feared, will not be that of the Besieger, but that he will see himself betrayed by his own Garrison.

In a word, by reducing those Sentiments, to which the Women attach so high an Idea, to their just Value; by explaining to them the real Intention of those Lovers who appear the most delicate, do not you see, that I engage them to be less vain of being beloved, and likewise to enjoy less Pleasure in loving; and you may be very certain, that if you could once set their Vanity in Opposition to their Inclination for Gallantry, their Virtue would suffer nothing by the Bargain.

I myself have had Lovers, but they have never been able to deceive me; for I knew perfectly well how to find them out. I was fully persuaded, that if the Qualities of the Mind, and the Character I possessed, had any Part in the Reasons which determined them to love me, it was only because those Qualities stirred up their Vanity. They were in Love with me, because I had a good Person, and they had Desires. But they only obtained the second Place in my Heart, the first being always reserved for my Friends. I have still preserved that Deference, Constancy, and even Respect for Friendship, which

which so noble a Sentiment, and one so worthy of possessing an exalted Mind, deserves. In a word, I have never been able to overcome my Distrust of those Hearts, where Love had possessed the principal Seat. This Weakness always degraded them in my Eyes, and I looked upon such Persons as incapable of entertaining Sentiments of true Esteem for a Woman, whom they earnestly wished to enjoy.

You see then, Sir, that the Consequence which ought to be drawn from my Principles, is far from being dangerous. All that the most sensible People can reproach me with, will probably be, my taking the Pains to prove to you a Truth, which they do not look upon to be problematical. But does not your Inexperience and Curiosity justify all that I have wrote to you, or that I might further write to you upon this Subject?

The End of the First Part.

LETTERS

O F

NINON DE LENCLOS,

TO THE

Marquifs DE SÉVIGNÉ.

PART II.

LETTER XXVIII.

YOU are quite in the right, Sir; the Countess's Taste and Turn for the Harpsicord, will both encrease your Love and Happiness. I have long told the Women, that they are not sensible enough of the Advantages which they might reap from their Talents; and they might be extremely useful to them on every Occasion. Most part of them imagine, that they have

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nothing

nothing to fear but the Presence of the Object beloved. It is true, they have at that Instant two Enemies to struggle with, their Love, and their Lover; but after the Lover is gone, their Love still remains; and the Progress which it makes when they are alone, tho' it be less sensible, is not therefore the less dangerous. 'Tis at that Time that the playing a Sonata, drawing a Flower, or reading a good Performance, diverts the Attention from too seducing an Object, and fixes their Imagination on Things that are useful. All those Occupations then, by which the Mind is kept intent, are to be looked upon as so many Thefts committed upon Love.

Let us suppose a Lover making his Addresses to his Mistress. What can he do with her, if she be only handsome and sweet-tempered? How can he occupy himself, if he does not find some particular Charm, or some Variety in her Conversation? Love is an active Passion; 'tis a Fire which devours, and always requires fresh Supplies of Fuel. If it cannot exercise its Activity but upon sensible Objects, it attaches itself to these,
and

and to these only. In short, when the Mind is not occupied, the Senses must. We express ourselves by Signs; I had almost said, that we are obliged to speak by Demonstration, to a Person who is incapable of understanding a more delicate Language. It is not by struggling against Attempts, nor by being offended at too warm an Embrace, that a Woman continues virtuous. When she allows herself to be attacked in this manner, in defending herself the Senses are kindled; and even that Agitation which her Resistance occasions, hastens her Defeat, and she yields whilst she is struggling with her Antagonist. But it is by turning the Attention of her Lover upon other Objects, that a Woman saves herself from being obliged to hinder the Attacks, or to be angry at those Liberties, which she herself has been the Cause of; for it is very certain, that the Men never make any Attempts, but upon such Women as are pleased with them. You will not find one of them, unless you suppose them absolutely void of Education, who has not a just Discernment of that Degree of Familiarity which he may venture
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to indulge. Thus, all those who complain of their Lovers making Attempts upon them, I give no manner of Ear to. Examine them well, and you will find, that their Blunders and Imprudences have been the Occasion of all. They wanted to have an Attempt made upon them. The want of Education may equally expose us to the same Inconveniences: for what can you do else with a Woman, who is void of Spirit and Talents? The only Method of killing Time with her, is by teasing her. You can speak to her of nothing but her Beauty, and the Impression it has made on your Senses; and all this can only be expressed in the Language of the Senses. She herself is not persuaded of your Passion, nor does she answer or reward it but by the Help of the Senses, and by discovering to you an Agitation equal to your own; or at best, her Prudence, almost quite overcome, has nothing left but Peevishness to oppose to you, which is the last Resource of an insipid Woman; and a poor one indeed it is. What Advantage, on the contrary, does a Woman, who is sprightly and well-accomplished,

ed, enjoy? A lively Repartee, a smart Piece of Raillery, a Quarrel seasoned with a little Malice, a happy Quotation, or a Story gracefully told; do not these furnish sufficient Variety for her, and is not the Time which she employs in them, so much gained on the Score of Virtue?

The greatest Misfortune to Women is, doubtless, their not being able to be occupied about Objects which are worthy of their Attention. It is this that makes Love a much more violent Passion with them, than with the Men. But they have a Something, which, when well directed, may serve them by Way of Antidote. They are all of them, at least, as vain as they are sensible; and their Sensibility therefore ought to be corrected by their Vanity. As long then as a Woman is taken up with a Desire of pleasing, otherwise than by her Figure, she loses Sight of that Passion which is the Spring of her Actions. Indeed this Passion will not cease to be the *determining* Motive; (you must excuse me, Sir, for making use of this Term of Art) but it will be no more the actual Object, and the one present to her View;
and

and this is taking a great Step. Thus entirely given up to the Care of perfecting herself in that kind of Glory which she wants to acquire, that very Desire, of which Love is the Source, will turn against Love itself, by dividing the Attention of the Mind, and the Affections of the Heart. In a word, it will make a Diversion.

You will tell me, perhaps, that Women of such Minds and Qualities as these, must be Proof against all Attempts. And thence you will likewise possibly conclude, that the Men, who are Lovers of Condescension in the Sex, ought to shun Women of that Stamp; yet nevertheless we see, that dull Fellows, as well as Men of Spirit, attach themselves to them. This is very true; but the dull Fellows only do it, because they do not know the Difficulty of succeeding; and the Men of Spirit, because they love to surmount that Difficulty.

Besides, you are a military Man, and therefore ought to form a just Judgment of what I say here of these Talents. I suppose then that, in the Campaign you are going to enter upon, they give you the Siege of
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some Town to conduct ; will you be pleased, if the Governor, persuaded that the Place is not impregnable, shall open the Gates to you, before he has given you the least Opportunity of signalizing yourself ? Certainly no. He must make a Resistance ; and the more Care he takes of his own Glory, the more he labours to promote yours. In the same manner, in Love as it is in War, the Pleasure of vanquishing is always proportioned to the Obstacles you meet with. Shall I tell you the whole ? I shall be tempted to push the Comparison a little further : this is the Effect of entering upon a Subject. The true Glory of a Woman consists, perhaps, less in not yielding at all, than in making a good Defence, in order that she may obtain the Honours of War.

I will go still further. Suppose a Woman weak enough to allow herself to be overcome ; what Method has she left to fix her happy Lover, if the Charms of the Mind, and her other Qualities, do not come in to her Assistance ? I know very well, that they are at no Pains to acquire these Advantages. But if you examine Things properly, there
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is hardly a Woman who, if she manages as she ought, might not be able to procure some of them; the Difference would only be with regard to more or less. But they are almost all born too indolent, to be capable of such an Effort. They have discovered, that there is nothing so convenient as that of being handsome. This manner of pleasing requires no Application, and they would be very glad if there was no other. Amazing Infatuation! They do not perceive, that Beauty and Talents draw upon them equally the Attention of the Men; but Beauty only exposes the Person who possesses it, and the Talents furnish her with Power to defend herself. In a word, to consider the thing aright, Beauty only prepares Regret and endless Disquiet, against the Time when it shall leave them; and would you know the Reason of it? 'Tis because it has made them neglect all the other Sources of Pleasure. While its Splendor lasts, a Woman sees herself admired, courted, and celebrated. A brilliant Court surrounds her; and she flatters herself that they will always look upon her with the same Eyes.

Eyes. But how frightful is the Desolation, when Age comes to ravish from her the only Merit which she had to boast of? I could wish therefore (the Expression is not elegant, but it will explain my Meaning); I could wish, I say, that in a Woman, Beauty served only as a Sign to all the other Qualities.

Let us conclude then, Sir, that in Love the Mind is of the greatest Service. An Intrigue may be considered as a kind of Play, in which the Acts are the shortest, and the Interludes the longest of any. Now tell me how you will be able to fill up these Interludes, if it is not by means of the Talents? Possession puts all Women on a Level, and exposes them all alike to the Infidelity of the Men. The pretty and the handsome, when they have nothing else to recommend them, in this respect have no Advantage over her who is not beautiful. The Mind alone, in this Case, makes all the Difference between them; and this alone furnishes, in the same Person, that Variety which is so necessary, in order to prevent Disgust. In short, nothing but the Talents can supply the Place of a Passion which is satisfied;

satisfied ; and nothing can be of greater Service to us, in whatever Station we can be supposed to be, whether it be in assisting to retard our Defeat, and render it more considered, or in lending their Aid to confirm our Conquests. Even our Lovers themselves reap the Advantages of them. How many Things ought they to encourage in us, tho' they turn against themselves? Thus the Countess, in cultivating her Talent for the Harpsicord, shews that she understands both her Interest and yours.

Upon reading over my Letter, my dear Marquiss, I tremble for fear you should find it too serious. This it is to deliver one's self up to bad Company. I supped last Night with M. *de la R. F. C.* and I constantly find myself corrupted in this manner, at least for three or four Days afterwards.

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L E T T E R XXIX.

I AM of your Opinion, Sir; the Countess punishes you too severely for the Confession which you surprized her into. Is it your Fault that her Secret has escaped her? She is certainly too far advanced to go back. I am not surprized at her being vexed at the thing sometimes; but to go the length to refuse to see you for the Space of three Days, to make them tell you that she was going into the Country for a Month, and to send back your tender Letters without deigning to open them, is, in my Opinion, a real Caprice of Virtue. But after all, whatever happens, do not despond; for, if she was really indifferent, you may be very sure she would be less severe.

I would not have you to mistake this Affair; upon these Occasions, a Woman is frequently less out of Humour with you, than she is with herself. It vexes her to find, that her Weakness is ready to betray her every Moment. She punishes you for it, and at the same time punishes herself by using you ill.
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But I can assure you, that a Day of this Kind of Caprice advances more a Lover's Success, than a whole Year's Care and Affiduity on his Part. Presently his Mistress reproaches herself with having used him unworthily; she looks upon herself as unjust; she wants to repair her Fault, and terminates the whole by becoming obliging.

What astonishes me the most, is that part of your Letter where you observe to me, that since the Countess has seemed to love you, her Character is entirely changed. I am altogether ignorant of the Cause of this Change. All that I know is, that she has made the first Figure as a gay Lady* for some Time; and this has been so much the more remarkable in her, that during the Life of her Husband, her Conduct was quite opposite. If you remember, when you first began to be acquainted with her, she was lively out of Measure, heedless, positive, and even a Coquette; and she ap-

* The Word in the Original is *petite Maitresse*, which I have translated a gay Lady, as coming nearest to that Character.

peared incapable of any reasonable Attachment ; but at present, you tell me, she is of a grave and melancholy Turn, frequently absent, timid, and obliging. Sense has succeeded to Airs, and an agreeable Temper has taken Place of Affectation ; at least, she seems to you to enter so well into the Character she appears in at present, that you imagine it is the true one, and that that which she put on at first was only borrowed. It would puzzle my Philosophy to account for this Metamorphose, if I did not discover it to be the Effect of Love. I am very much deceived, if the Storm which you suffer at present, does not prognosticate to you the most entire Victory ; and it will be so much the more compleat, as every thing that was possible has been done to dispute it with you. But if you follow constantly your Object ; if you push your Pursuit even to Importunity ; if you constantly frequent every Place where you can see her ; if you resolve not to mention any thing of your Passion to her, and shew yourself attached, and respectful, and at the same time struck with her, what will be the Consequence ?

quence? She will not be able to refuse you that Regard which is owing even to indifferent Persons in the same Situation. Besides, the Women have an inexhaustible Fund of Kindness for those who love them, which you Men are very sensible of; and it is that which supports you whenever we use you ill. You know that your Presence, your Affiduity, and the Uneasiness which you pretend to suffer, have their Effect, and at last disarm our Pride. You are persuaded that the Men, whom our Virtue most violently rejects, are precisely they whom it is the most afraid of; and, unfortunately for us, it is but too just; for, in fact, it only keeps them at a Distance, because it is not sure of being able to resist them. Sometimes it goes further, and even challenges the Enemy whose Attack it dares not wait for. In a word, the Courage of a virtuous Woman is almost always capable of making one Effort; but it is very rare that this Effort is durable. The very Excess of its Violence, is the Cause that it does not last. The Mind has only a certain Degree of Force, and when that is exhausted

hausted by means of this Effort, it finds itself fatigued, and presently the Sense of its Weakness discourages it. Tho' it stands the first Shock of a formidable Enemy boldly, the second frightens it, when the Danger is better known. A Woman who is persuaded that she has done all that is in her Power, in order to hinder herself from being led astray by a favourite Passion, satisfied with the Struggles she has already made, she is soon persuaded, that she cannot possibly resist the Power of Love any longer; and if she does still hold it out, it is not by means of her own proper Force; what further Assistance she receives, flows only from the Impression which her Pride at first made on him who attacks her, and the Timidity which her first Resistance occasioned. Thus, if she has ever such a small Share of Understanding, she almost always begins by making a good Defence; and there is no Occasion for any thing but Pride to put her upon this. But unfortunately you guess at the Means of overcoming it, you persist in attacking her, and she is not indefatigable; and you have so little Delicacy, that pro-

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vided you gain her Heart, it is all one to you, whether it be owing to your Importunities, or her free Consent. Further, Sir, those extraordinary Precautions which are taken against you, plainly demonstrate how much you are feared. If you were an indifferent Object to her, would she be at the Pains to fly from you? I can assure you, she would not do you the Honour of being afraid of you. But I know how unreasonable Lovers are, always ingenious to torment themselves; the Habit of being possessed entirely with one Object, is with them so powerful, that they would rather chuse to be employed in thinking disagreeably of it, than not think of it at all. In the meantime, I am heartily sorry for you. Considering how you are despised, your Situation cannot fail of being very irksome to you. The poor Marquis, how ill he is used!

L E T -

LETTER XXX.

I AM charmed to hear, before I set out for the Country, that you are more easy in your Mind. I must frankly own to you, that if the Countess had persisted in treating you with the same Severity, I should have imagined, not that she was insensible, but that a formidable Rival had gained a Place in her Affections. Such a Resistance would, in Effect, have surpassed the Force of Reason, unassisted by other Powers. For you may be very sure, Sir, that a Woman is never more untractable, than when, out of the Kindness she has for a favourite Lover, her Pride rises up against all other Men.

In the mean while, all you say to me proves that you are beloved, and you only. I shall be able very soon to give you certain Advice of it; for I am going myself to examine the Countess. This Resolution will no doubt surprize you; but your Surprise will cease, when you are informed, that the House of *Madam de la Sabliere*, where I am going to spend a Week, borders on the

Estate of your lovely Widow. You tell me that she is just set out for that Place: Add to the Vicinity, the extreme Desire which I have of being acquainted with her, and you will not at all wonder at the Promise I have made you. — They will not allow me Time to finish my Letter, nor even to send what I have wrote to you. I must set out immediately. My Travel-Companion rallies me at a strange Rate, and alledges I am writing a Love-Letter. I indulge her in that Fancy; and take this Paper along with me, to continue my Letter in the Country. Adieu. It seems then, the Indisposition of Madam *de Grignan* will not permit you to come and see us in our Retirement.

From the Château de ———

I write to you from the Countess's, my dear Marquis, and this is the third Day I have passed at her House; from whence you will conclude, that I am a piece of a Favourite. She is an adorable Woman; I am quite enchanted with her. I doubt sometimes if you deserve to possess a Heart like hers. I am her favourite Confident. She
has

has told me every thing that she thinks of you ; and I do not despair of discovering to you, before my Return to Town, the Reasons of that Change which you have observed in her Character. I dare say no more to you at present, lest some-body should come into my Apartment ; and I would not chuse that they should know I write to you from this Place. Adieu.

L E T T E R XXXI.

I Have News to tell you, which will give you great Pleasure. I was preparing to execute my Promise to you, and proposed going cunningly to work with the Countess, in order, if possible, to get her Secret out of her, when a lucky Incident saved me the Trouble. You are not ignorant of the Confidence she puts in *M. de la Sabliere*. She was lately with him in one of the Arbors of her Garden : I crossed a Walk in order to join them, and was on the Point of accosting them, when I heard your Name mentioned. Upon this, I stopped short, and overheard every thing they said, without being

observed. The Conversation between them was Word for Word as follows :

“ I find I have not been able to conceal
“ from your Penetration, the Regard I have
“ for M. *de Sevigné*; and you cannot recon-
“ cile the Seriousness of so fixed a Passion,
“ with the Character of Levity which I have
“ in the World. But you will be much more
“ surprized, when I tell you, that my out-
“ ward Character is not my real one, and
“ that the Gravity which strikes you at
“ present, is only a Return of my natural
“ Temper. In a word, that it was on'y
“ by Design that I acted the Part of a gay
“ Lady. Perhaps you may imagine, that
“ the Women are only able to dissemble
“ their Failings ; but they go a great deal
“ further, Sir, and I am an Instance of it :
“ They even disguise their Virtues. And
“ since that Word has escaped me, I am
“ tempted, even at the Risk of becoming
“ irksome to you, to inform you by what
“ singular Gradation I arrived at all this
“ Hypocrisy.

“ During

“ During the Time I was married, I lived
 “ quite retired. You knew the Count, my
 “ Husband, and the Taste he had for Soli-
 “ tude. After I became a Widow, it was
 “ necessary I should make my Appearance
 “ in the World ; and I was not a little em-
 “ barrased to resolve on the properest man-
 “ ner of setting out. I examined my own
 “ Mind, and found I had a Taste for the
 “ Pleasures of Society ; but at the same
 “ time, I was resolved to join to it a Purity
 “ of Manners. But how were these to be
 “ reconciled together ? ‘It appeared to me
 “ extremely difficult to form to myself a
 “ System of Conduct, which, without ex-
 “ posing me, would not deprive me of the
 “ Pleasures of Life.

“ I reasoned with myself in this manner :
 “ Being destined to live among the Men,
 “ formed to please them, and partake of
 “ their Happiness, we ought likewise to ex-
 “ pect to suffer from their Failings ; and
 “ above all, their Malice is what we have
 “ to fear. It would seem as if the sole
 “ End of our Education was only to ren-
 “ der us fit for Love. Nay, that is the

“ only Passion which they have permitted
“ us ; and yet, by a cruel and absurd Con-
“ tradiction, they have left us only one
“ sort of Glory to acquire, which is precise-
“ ly that of resisting this Passion. I con-
“ sidered then what was best to be done, in
“ order to unite in Practice two Extremes
“ so directly opposite ; and I could find
“ nothing but Difficulties on every Quar-
“ ter. We are simple enough, said I to
“ myself, when we first appear in the World,
“ to imagine, that the greatest Happiness
“ of a Woman must consist in loving, and
“ being beloved. We then suppose, that
“ Love is founded on Esteem, supported
“ by the observing of amiable Qualities,
“ refined by delicate Sentiments, free from
“ all those disagreeable Circumstances which
“ disfigure it ; in a word, kept up by the
“ Confidence and Overflowings of the
“ Heart. But unfortunately this Passion,
“ so flattering to a Woman without Expe-
“ rience, is almost the very Reverse, in
“ Practice, of what I have described ; and
“ we are always too late in finding out our
“ Mistake.

“ I was

“ I was simple enough at first to be of-
“ fended at two Imperfections which I ob-
“ served in the Men, *viz.* their Inconstancy
“ and Treachery. But upon Reflection I
“ have found, that the first of these Fail-
“ ings renders them more unhappy than
“ blameworthy. Considering the manner in
“ which their Hearts are formed, have they
“ it in their Power to be always filled with
“ the same Object? No. But does their
“ Falseness deserve the same Indulgence?
“ Most part of them attack the Women in
“ cold Blood, with a Design to make them
“ contribute to their Amusement, or to sa-
“ crifice them to their Vanity, in order to
“ fill up the Void of an indolent Life, or
“ to acquire to themselves a kind of Repu-
“ tation, founded on the Destruction of
“ ours. The greatest Number are of this
“ Stamp; but how are we to distinguish
“ these from the true Lovers? They have
“ all the same outward Appearance; and
“ the Man who counterfeits being in Love,
“ is sometimes more seducing, than he who
“ is so in fact.

“ Besides, we are simple enough to consider Love as quite a capital Affair. You
“ Men, on the other hand, make only a
“ Jest of it. We seldom give ourselves up
“ to it, without a Liking to the Object;
“ whilst you have so little Delicacy, as to
“ give into it without any Taste. We make
“ it a Duty to be constant to a Lover;
“ whilst you yield, without any Scruple, to
“ the slightest Disgust. You scarcely observe Decency in quitting a Mistress, the
“ Possession of whom, but six Months before, constituted your greatest Happiness
“ and Glory. Happy she, if you do not
“ punish her for her Favours, by the most
“ cruel Indiscretions.

“ I then began to consider things in a very serious Light, and reasoned with myself
“ thus: Love brings along with it so many
“ Misfortunes, that a Woman who has any
“ Regard to her Quiet and Reputation,
“ ought never to be in Love. In the meantime, every thing tells me that we have
“ a Heart, that this Heart was made for
“ Love, and that Love is involuntary.
“ Wherefore then should we endeavour to
destroy

“ destroy a Passion which makes a Part of
 “ ourselves? Would it not be the wisest
 “ Method to strive to rectify it? Let us see
 “ then how it is possible to succeed in this
 “ Attempt.

“ Which is the Kind of Love that is dan-
 “ gerous? I have observed it is that, which
 “ possesses the Soul entirely, which absorbs
 “ all the other Passions, and renders us in-
 “ capable of being occupied with any other;
 “ in short, which makes us sacrifice every
 “ thing to the Object beloved.

“ Which are the Characters the most sus-
 “ ceptible of such Feelings? They are pre-
 “ cisely the most sensible, and those which
 “ make the least outward Shew, which unite
 “ the strongest Sense with the most noble
 “ and elevated Sentiments.

“ But who are the most formidable Men
 “ to Women of this Character? They are
 “ those who do not possess any brilliant Qua-
 “ lities, but such as are requisite to set real
 “ Merit in a proper Light. It must be
 “ granted, that such Men are very bad
 “ Company for a Woman who thinks. It
 “ is true, they are very rare at present, and

“ there never was an Age more proper than
“ the present, to guard us from violent Pas-
“ sions. But the Misfortune is, that one
“ may possibly light upon such a Man in the
“ Crowd.

“ The Moralists alledge, that each of us
“ possesses a certain Portion of Sensibility,
“ destined to be exercised on some Object
“ or other. A sensible Woman takes no
“ Notice of a thousand little Qualities,
“ which are pleasing in the Men to the ge-
“ nerality of Women. When she meets with
“ an Object worthy of her Attention, it is
“ quite natural for her to be sensible of the
“ Value of it ; and her Affection is propor-
“ tioned to the Extent of her Knowledge ;
“ she cannot restrain it within the ordinary
“ Bounds. It is therefore such Characters
“ as these we ought to avoid resembling ;
“ and it is such Men as I have been speaking
“ of, whose Company and Correspondence
“ we ought carefully to shun, if we have
“ but the least Regard for our Repose. We
“ must then assume a Character, which can
“ procure to us two Advantages at once ;
“ the one, to preserve us from too strong
“ Impressions

“ Impressions ; and the other, to keep at a
 “ Distance from us those Men, which are
 “ capable of making such Impressions. Our
 “ outward Behaviour must be such, as may
 “ at least hinder them from shewing them-
 “ selves to the greatest Advantage. We
 “ must put them upon the Necessity of en-
 “ deavouring to please us by Trifling and
 “ Foppery. Thus, by becoming affected,
 “ their Failings will furnish us with Arms
 “ against them. But what happy Situation
 “ can procure us all these Preservatives ?
 “ None but that of a gay Lady.

“ You are surprized at the singular Con-
 “ sequence which I have been conducted to
 “ by this serious Train of Reasoning : But
 “ you will be much more so, upon hearing
 “ me argue in Form, to prove to you that
 “ I am right ; but hear me to an End. I
 “ am no Stranger to the Justness of your
 “ Judgment, and I likewise value myself
 “ upon not being deficient in that respect,
 “ however trifling I may have appeared to
 “ you ; nor do I doubt, but, in the End,
 “ you will be of my Opinion.

“ Do

“ Do you believe, that the outward Ap-
“ pearance of Virtue, can guard the Heart
“ from the Approaches of Love? Poor Re-
“ source! When a Woman once becomes
“ capable of a Weakness, she is mortified
“ in Proportion to the Esteem which she
“ wanted artfully to obtain. The higher
“ that the Pride of her Virtue has risen, the
“ more does she expose herself to the Ma-
“ lice of her Enemies.

“ Besides, what an Idea does the World
“ form of a virtuous Woman? Are not the
“ Men unjust enough to believe, that the
“ wisest Woman is she who best conceals
“ her Weaknesses; or who, by a forced
“ Retreat, puts it out of her Power to shew
“ them? Nay, they are so afraid of grant-
“ ing us any Perfection, that they have
“ even the Malice to suppose, that when-
“ ever we attempt to resist them, it is al-
“ ways forced. There is no virtuous Wo-
“ man, says a Friend of ours, who is not
“ weary of her Condition. And what is
“ the Reward of those Torments, to which
“ they think we are condemned? Do they
“ bestow any Praise on such heroic Efforts?

No.

“ No. A Woman of the most Honour,
 “ according to them, is one whom they
 “ never mention. That is to say, a perfect
 “ Indifference on their Side, and a general
 “ Forgetfulness, is the Reward of our Vir-
 “ tue. Must not we be very virtuous in-
 “ deed, to preserve it at this Rate? - Who
 “ would not be tempted to abandon it? But
 “ there are serious Matters to be considered,
 “ which cannot be disguised.

“ Dishonour treads close on the Heel of
 “ Weakness. Old Age, of itself, has a
 “ frightful Aspect; and what must it be,
 “ when we are obliged to pass it in Remorse?
 “ I was sensible of the Necessity of avoid-
 “ ing this Misfortune. I imagined at first
 “ that I could not succeed in it, but by
 “ condemning myself to a very austere
 “ Life; and I found that I had not Cou-
 “ rage enough to enter upon it. But pre-
 “ sently, the Character of a gay Lady
 “ seemed alone capable to reconcile the En-
 “ joyment of Pleasure with that of Virtue.
 “ I observe by your smiling, that that Opi-
 “ nion appears to you to be quite a Para-
 “ dox;

“ dox ; but it is more reasonable than you
“ imagine.

“ Tell me, Sir, is a gay Lady obliged to
“ have an Attachment ? Does not the World
“ excuse her from being tender ? It is suf-
“ ficient that she is amiable, and that she
“ thinks of nothing but external Appear-
“ ances. Provided she acts her Part well,
“ 'tis enough if she be allowed to have any
“ Heart at all. Her good Figure, and the
“ Airs which she gives herself, her Frolicks,
“ fashionable Jargon, particular Fancies,
“ and an out-of-the-way Taste, make up
“ the Sum of what is required of her.
“ She may be virtuous in the main, with-
“ out suffering for it. When a Person takes
“ it into his Head to attack her, if he meets
“ with Resistance, he presently leaves off
“ teasing her. He supposes that the
“ Place is already taken, and waits patiently
“ for his Turn. His persevering would
“ only hurt him : It would evince him to
“ be a Man, who is ignorant of the Re-
“ spect due to those Measures which were
“ taken before he declared himself ; so that
“ the

“ the Lady is even sheltered, by the bad
“ Opinion which they have of her.

“ I read in your Eyes what you are going
“ to say : that by becoming a gay Lady I
“ might hurt my Reputation, and expose
“ myself to those Inconveniencies, which
“ I would chuse to avoid. Is not this what
“ you was thinking? But do not you know,
“ Sir, that the most rigid Conduct is not
“ sufficient to secure us from malicious Re-
“ proaches. Our Character is founded on
“ the Opinion of the Men ; and the good
“ or bad Idea which they conceive of us,
“ is almost always equally false. 'Tis Pre-
“ possession, or a kind of Fatality which de-
“ termines their Judgment ; so that our
“ Reputation depends less upon real Virtue
“ than upon fortunate Circumstances. The
“ Hopes of possessing an honourable Rank
“ in their Imagination, ought not then a-
“ lone to animate us in the Practice of Vir-
“ tue ; it ought chiefly to be the Desire of
“ being satisfied with one's self, and to be
“ able to say, that whatever may be the
“ Opinion of the Public with regard to us,
“ *we have nothing to reproach ourselves with.*

“ And

“ And after all, what does it signify what
“ our Virtue is owing to, provided we really
“ preserve it ?

“ I was therefore convinced, that I cou'd
“ not do better, upon setting out in the
“ World, than to put on the Mask which I
“ thought the most favourable to my Ease
“ and Reputation. I attached myself still
“ more firmly to my Friend, who had as-
“ sisted me with her Advice. This was the
“ Marchioness of ———, my Relation.
“ There was a perfect Conformity of Sen-
“ timents between us ; we frequented the
“ same Societies ; and to tell the Truth,
“ Charity for our Neighbour was not our
“ most favourite Virtue. We entered the
“ Circle in the same manner as a Ball-room,
“ where we were the only Persons who
“ were masked. There we indulged our-
“ selves in all Kinds of Frolicks, and
“ tempted ridiculous Characters to shew
“ themselves. After amusing ourselves suf-
“ ficiently with this Farce, our Pleasure did
“ not terminate with it, but was renewed
“ afterwards when we got together by our-
“ selves. What Fools the Women ap-
“ peared

“ peared to us there! What empty Crea-
“ tures the Men! What a deal of Foppery!
“ How many Impertinencies! If in the
“ Company there appeared one capable of
“ making himself feared, that is, esteem-
“ ed, we vexed him with our Airs, by af-
“ fecting to slight him, and by the Praises
“ we bestowed on those who least deserved
“ it. At last, however, in order to remain
“ still disingaged, we were almost persuaded,
“ that it would be proper for us to visit bad
“ Company.

“ This Conduct defended us a long Time
“ from the Snares of Love, and saved us
“ from that mortal Disgust, with which a
“ more severe and sullen Virtue would have
“ embittered our Lives. Trifling, impe-
“ rious, obstinate, and even Coquettes, if
“ you please, in Company with the Men;
“ but solid, reasonable and virtuous in our
“ own Eyes; we were perfectly happy with
“ this Character. There did not appear
“ one Man, whom we had reason to be
“ afraid of: those who had it in their Power
“ to make themselves feared by us, were
“ obliged to put on ridiculous Airs, in or-
“ der

“ der to be suffered, and made welcome
“ among us.

“ But that which has made me doubt of
“ the real Truth of my Principles is, that
“ they have not always been able to pre-
“ serve me from those Dangers, which I
“ would gladly have avoided. I found by
“ Experience, that Love is a Traitor whom
“ it is not safe to dally with. I do not
“ know by what Fatality it has happened,
“ that the Marquiss *de Sevigné* has rendered
“ my Projects useless. In spite of all my
“ Precautions, he has found the Way to
“ my Heart. Tho’ I have resisted him as
“ much as possible, I have been forced to
“ love him, and my Reason serves me in no
“ further Stead, but to justify to myself the
“ Liking I have taken to him. Happy
“ shall I think myself, if he never gives me
“ any Occasion to change my Sentiments.
“ I have not even been able to hinder my-
“ self from discovering to him my real
“ manner of thinking; and I should be
“ afraid at last, of his thinking me to be as
“ foolish in reality, as I have appeared to
“ him to be. And altho’ my Sincerity
“ should

“ should render me less amiable in his Eyes
 “ (for I am sensible that Folly captivates the
 “ Men more than real Merit,) I am willing
 “ to shew myself to him in my real Cha-
 “ racter. For I should be ashamed to owe
 “ his Affection only to a constant Misrepre-
 “ sentation of every thing about me.”

“ I am still less surprized, Madam,” re-
 plied M. *de la Sabliere*, “ at the Novelty of
 “ your Project, than at the Address with
 “ which you have been able to render so
 “ singular an Idea plausible. Allow me to
 “ tell you, that it is impossible to ramble
 “ with more Spirit. You have likewise
 “ suffered the Fate of all Projectors: They
 “ take long By-ways to avoid the common
 “ Road, and yet they find themselves no
 “ less exposed to the same Difficulties, than if
 “ they had kept in it. And to make use
 “ of that Privilege you have allowed me,
 “ of telling you plainly my Opinion, be-
 “ lieve me, Madam, that the only Method
 “ of preserving your Repose, is to profess
 “ yourself openly a reasonable Woman.
 “ We must always be Gainers, by coming
 “ to a Composition with Virtue.”

As

As soon as I found that the Conversation began to take this Turn, I suspected that probably it must be near a Close, so I withdrew as softly as I could, and thought of nothing but satisfying your Curiosity. I am quite jaded with writing this long Letter. In two Days we shall return to Paris.

L E T T E R XXXII.

WELL, Sir, I am returned to Town; but the News I bring you, will possibly not be to your Liking. You never had so just an Occasion to accuse the Women of Caprice. I wrote to you last Time, to tell you that you was beloved; and now I must inform you of quite the contrary. There are strange Resolutions taken against you. Tremble; the thing is determined. The Countess will love you no more, but as she pleases, and without ever disturbing herself about the Matter. She has seen the Consequences of a Passion like yours, and has therefore taken a Resolution to stop the Torrent of it. You must not be encouraged then, at whatever Proofs she has given you
of

of her Inclination towards you. You Men imagine, that whenever a Woman makes a Declaration of her Passion, 'tis afterwards impossible for her to break the Chain. But I would not have you to impose upon yourself in this manner. The Countess has much more Command of herself, with regard to you, than you imagine; and I frankly own to you, that she partly owes it to the Advice I have given her. You must not therefore rely any more upon my Letters; and indeed you have no further need of their Assistance, in order to let you know the Women. I am even a little vexed, at having probably furnished you with Arms against them: For otherwise, would you ever have been able to touch the Heart of the Countess? I must confess, I have judged too severely of my Sex, and now am ready to make them Amends. At present, I am well convinced, that there are more sensible and virtuous Woman than I imagined. What a Fund of Reason! What an Assemblage of all the valuable Qualities in our Friend! No, Sir, it was impossible for me not to esteem her most tenderly; and, without
con-

consulting your Interest, I joined with her against you. You will be out of Humour at it; but did not the Confidence she placed in me, require such an Acknowledgment on my Part? I will not offer to conceal my Naughtiness in the least from you; I have carried my Malice so far, as to inform her of those Advantages which you may have reaped, from what I have wrote to you concerning the Women. “I am sensible,” said she to me, “how formidable that Lover is, who joins
“to such a perfect Knowledge of the Heart,
“the Talent of expressing himself elegantly
“and with Delicacy. What Advantages
“has not such a one over a Woman, who
“thinks and reasons? I have observed, that
“it is even by reasoning that he seduces
“her. He has the Art to employ his Sense,
“to justify to the Eyes of Reason those
“Errors into which he has betrayed her.
“Besides, a Mistress thinks herself obliged
“to proportion her Concessions, to the
“Knowledge she has of his good Qualities.
“With an ordinary Man, a Weakness is
“only a Weakness, and we are ashamed of
“it; but with a Man of Parts, ’tis a Tri-
“bute

“ bute which we think due to his Merit,
“ and is even a Proof of our Judgment ;
“ nay, it even proclaims our Taste, and we
“ approve of it. It is thus that, by giving
“ to Vanity that which he takes from Vir-
“ tue, this Enchanter hinders us from ob-
“ serving the Gradation of our Weakness.”

Such are, at present, Sir, the Setiments of the Countess, and I am afraid, they do not leave you much Grounds of Hope.

I am sensible, that it would certainly have been better to make those Reflections, and to pursue our Scheme without informing you of it, which was indeed our first Resolution. But could I, in Conscience, labour secretly against you? Would not this have been betraying you? Besides, by acting in this manner, we would seem to be afraid of you; and we find we have Courage enough to inform you of every thing we do in order to oppose you. Come then, Sir, we are quite impatient to see you. And would you know the Reason of it? 'Tis because we expect you, without being afraid of you. Consider, it is no more a Mistress whom you have to encounter: She would be too feeble

an Adversary for you, and her Courage might fail her. But it is I, a Woman in cold Blood, who thinks her Honour engaged, to save the Reason of her Friend from Shipwreck. Yes, I will penetrate even to the very Bottom of your Soul; there will I read your wicked Designs, and prevent them, and render abortive all your mischievous Artifices. You may accuse me of Treachery as much as you please; but come this Evening, and I will convince you, that my whole Conduct is founded upon the most exact Equity. While your Inexperience stood in need of Information, Support or Encouragement, my Zeal for you made me sacrifice every thing to your Interest. At that Time, the Countess had all the Advantage on her Side: But Things have greatly changed their Aspect since. All the Pride she is Mistress of, is scarcely sufficient at present to enable her to resist you. Formerly, she had an Indifference in her Favour, and, that which was still a greater Help to her, your bad Address; but now, you have gained Experience, and she has her Reason weakened. After this, to join
with

with you against her, to betray the Confidence she has put in me, and refuse her that Assistance she has a Right to expect from me, you yourself will own, provided you are sincere, that this would be acting a very wicked Part. I will, therefore, henceforth endeavour to repair the Mischief which I may have done, by revealing to you our Secrets, and initiating you into our Mysteries. I do not know for what Reason, but considering the Pleasure I feel in thwarting you, I appear to myself to be acting on my own Account ; tho', for all this, you know how far my Right to you extends. My Sentiments shall always continue the same ; and as to you, I am convinced, that you are too equitable to allow any thing I do at present in favour of a Friend, to diminish in the least the Esteem you have for me. Fly then to the Countess as fast as you can.

LETTER XXXIII.

WHAT, Sir, you are then afraid of two Women, and already despair of your Affairs, because they oppose your Success; and now you are ready to throw up all Pretensions. I thought, indeed, you had more Courage. It is true, the Countess's Resolution has even astonished myself; and I cannot comprehend how she was able to hold out a whole Evening against your eager Addresses. I never beheld you so tempting before, and she owns to me, that she never before found you so formidable. Henceforth I can well be answerable for her, as her Courage has not failed her in such a dangerous Trial. But I have even observed something more than all this: the manner in which she supported her ironical Humour, would almost tempt me to believe, that she is but gently touched. A Woman who is really in Love, cannot behave in so unconcerned a Manner. This brings into my Head a very singular Idea. It would be pleasant enough if, while we were thus diverting

verting ourselves, you should discover, that your tender *Adelaïda* does not love you so much as you have imagined. What a terrible Blow would this be to your Vanity? But you would soon endeavour to revenge yourself, and find handsome Women ready to comfort you under your Loss. How often would Vexation make you cry out, "What is the Heart of a Woman! Let them define it to me now."

But after all I must tell you, that I cannot help being concerned for you; and if I should find that you lay it too much to Heart, there is nothing I would not do to render your Situation more agreeable. But I know you have Resolution; and as soon as the first Fits of Passion are over, you will presently see, that the best Step you can take is to reduce yourself to the Quality of a Friend, which we have so generously offered you. You ought even to think yourself very happy in this, because your Leave might have been peremptory. In the mean time, I would not have you to pride yourself too much in that; for you would be worse treated, if we were more afraid of you.

Adieu, Sir. The Countess, who is at my Bedside, says a thousand tender Things of you. She is much pleased with the Civility of your Behaviour towards us: Not to be obstinate, when two Ladies appeared against you, is extremely gallant. So much Modesty will surely disarm them, and some time or other may chance to raise their Pity. Pluck up a Heart then; you have still some Grounds of Hope.

From the Countess.

If it was proper for you, Sir, to conceive from thence the most flattering Hopes, I would add two or three Words at the Bottom of this Letter. I have not read it; I only suspect that it contains something about me. All that I want to tell you is, that we are to pass the Day here all alone. I would assure you myself, that I love you indifferently at present, and have all the Desire in the World to love you no more at all. However, if you endeavour to disturb us, I have the Pleasure of letting you know, that your Heart will be in great Danger. They want to persuade me, that I am handsomer To-day,

day than you ever yet saw me; and I never found myself so strongly disposed to use you ill, as I am at present.

LETTER XXXIV.

ALL this, Sir, begins to have something in it more than Jest. Explain yourself, I beseech you. Do you pretend to speak seriously in your Letter, in giving me to understand that I acted on this Occasion out of Jealousy, and endeavoured to put you out of Favour with the Countess, only for my own Advantage. You are either the most wicked, or the most artful Man in the World. The most wicked, if you could ever imagine me guilty of such a Crime; and the most artful, if you have only thrown in this Surmize in order to render me suspected by my Friend. But what I see the clearest of all is this, that either of these is to me equally injurious, as the Countess has taken the thing in a serious Light. I have just left her in the greatest Embarrassment. Wicked Man that you are, too well do you know your Ascendancy over her Heart.

You could not have attacked her more successfully, than by that Shew of Indifference which you affect. Not to vouchsafe to answer my last Letter; not to meet us as we proposed to you; to be three Days without seeing us; and, after all this, to write the most indifferent Letter imaginable: I must indeed own, that this was acting the Part of a Man of consummate Knowledge. It is truly what I call a Master-piece; and your Hopes have been crowned with the most compleat Success. The Countess was not able to bear so much Coldness; and the Fear lest this Indifference should be real, has disquieted her extremely. Come, cruel Marquiss, come and behold your Doings; come and dry up the Tears you have caused to flow; come and glory in your Victory, and in our Defeat. Good God! what is the most reasonable Woman, when Love has turned her Head! Why was not you a Witness of those Reproaches which I have suffered! What are they, you will say? To hear the Countess at present, she would make you believe, that I have had the most unjust Suspicion of her Virtue; I have entertained

tained a false Idea of your Designs, and have supposed them criminal, in order to have the Pleasure of punishing you for them. She calls me hard-hearted, cruel and unjust, with I do not know what more Epithets of the same Kind. What violent Transports! Well, I declare to you, this shall be the last Storm I will suffer for meddling with your Affairs; and I willingly renounce all that Confidence, which both of you have honoured me with. Those who give Advice in such Cases, have a hard Part to act, as far as I can see: They always remain charged with whatever is disagreeable in the Quarrel, and the Lovers alone enjoy the Benefit of the Reconcilement.

Mean while, upon Reflection, I see something that will divert me in all this. I consider you as two Children, whose Follies will amuse me. I ought to look upon you with a philosophical Eye, and still continue to be a Friend to you both. Come then immediately, and let me know whether this Resolution is agreeable to you or not. Let us have no more of your childish Cruelty, but come and make Peace. These

poor Children ; the Views of the one are so innocent, and the other is so sure of her Virtue, that to offer to curb their Inclinations, would certainly be chastising them without any Reason.

LETTER XXXV.

I See very plainly, Sir, that the only Method of living on good Terms with even the most reasonable Woman, is never to concern one's self with her Amours. I am firmly resolved, never more to mention you to the Countess, but when she forces me to it ; for I am by no means fond of Broils. Mean while, this Resolution shall have no Effect on my Regard for you, nor even on that Friendship which I shall preserve for her. But, tho' I remain her Friend, I shall make no Scruple to use you as I have hitherto done ; and continue, since you require it, to communicate to you my Ideas, with regard to whatever Situation you may find yourself in ; provided, however, that you sometimes permit me to laugh at your Expenditure : which Liberty, by the bye, I shall not
take

take at present ; for if the Countess pursues the Plan she has laid down, not to see you alone, I do not see that your Amour can advance very fast. She recollects what I have told her ; she knows her own Heart, that she has Reason to fear it. She must be but an imprudent Woman, who will trust to her own Strength, and expose herself heedlessly to the Addresses of a Man whom she loves. There is nothing so dangerous to us as the Approach of the Object beloved. The Agitation which animates it, the Fire which puts it as it were all in Flame, stimulates our Senses, kindles our Imagination, and rouses our Desires. I told the Countess one Day, that we Women bear no small Resemblance to her Harpsicord, which, however well it be tuned to the Hand which is to play upon it, remains nevertheless silent, till it feels the Impression of the Fingers ; but only touch the Keys, and immediately the Notes express themselves. I leave you to finish the Parallel of this Simile, and draw the Consequences from it.

But, after all, what do you complain of, my metaphysical Friend ? To see the Coun-

ness, to hear the soft Tone of her Voice, to render her little Services, to pursue with her the Delicacy of Sentiments till they are quite out of Sight, to be edified by her Discourse on Virtue, is not this the greatest Happiness you can possibly enjoy? Leave to low earthly Souls, those groveling Sentiments which begin to display themselves before you. To judge of you at present, one would say I was not so much in the wrong, in asserting that Love was the Work of the Senses. Your proper Experience forces you to own, that I was pretty much in the right; and I am not sorry for it. You ought to be punished for your Injustice. Adieu.

The Chevalier, your old Rival, has then revenged himself for the Severity of the Countess, by attaching himself to the Marchioness her Relation. This Choice is certainly an Encomium on his Taste; they were made for each other; and I shall be very glad to know whither this refined Passion of theirs will carry them.

L E T -

LETTER XXXVI.

YOU believe then, Sir, that I have not felt all the Irony of those Compliments which you are pleased to make me, on my pretended Reconciliation with the Countess; but I would have you know, that we have never had any Difference. It is true, she has desired me to forget her Pertness: She has placed every thing to the Account of Love; and prayed me to continue giving her my Advice. But what will all my Advices signify, except to prepare for you a further Triumph? The best I could give her, would be to break off with you; for whatever Confidence she may place in her Pride, her Flight alone can be a certain Preservative against you. She imagines, for Instance, that she has given a strong Example of her Reason, in talking with you in the manner you have communicated to me; but every reasonable Woman makes use of the same Language, whenever a Lover begins to disclose his Passion for her. I want nothing but your Heart, say they, your

Love and your Esteem is all that I desire. You will find but too many Women, who have so little Delicacy, as to think themselves very happy to accept of what they refuse. I shall always envy a Happiness of this Kind. Take care, Sir, of openly contradicting those fine Sentiments. To doubt of the Sincerity of the Women, on these Occasions, is more than being offensive, 'tis behaving quite rude. You must applaud their Error, if you would reap Advantage from it. They want to appear delicate, and only sensible to the Pleasures of the Mind. This is their System. 'Tis their very Soul. If some of them are in earnest, how many are there who impose upon themselves, and endeavour to impose upon others?

But whatever be the Cause which determines them to change, are not you very happy that they will take the Trouble to impose upon you in this manner? How much ought you to think yourself obliged to them? By acting thus, they bestow great Merit upon Things, which otherwise would appear but little desirable. How admirable is our Address! By feigning an Indifference for
what

what you call the Pleasures of Love, and even by affecting an Aversion to them, we augment the Value of the Sacrifice we make to you. We thereby charge with Returns of Gratitude, the very Authors of the Favours we receive: You are become our Debtors, for the Good you do us. And since we must impose upon you, ought you not to think yourselves greatly in our Debt, for having made Choice of the most agreeable manner of doing it? You are the Gainers in this Imposition; for it is impossible for us to multiply the Difficulties, without encreasing the Glory of your Victory. Are not Disquiets and Cares the Money with which Lovers pay off their Pleasures? What Satisfaction is it to your Vanity, to be able to say to yourselves, this Woman, who was so delicate, so insensible to sensual Impressions; this Woman, who was so much afraid of being disdained, nevertheless sacrifices to me her Aversions, her Fears, and Pride. My Merit, the Charms of my Person, and my Address, have surmounted Obstacles invincible to every body else. How infinitely well pleased am I with myself!

But

But if the Women acted sincerely, if they were as eager to discover their Desires as you are to penetrate them, you would not be able to say all this. What a deal of Pleasure would you lose by this Means! You must not therefore make a Crime of this Artifice, from whence arises so many Advantages to you. Affect to be imposed upon, and the Imposition will give you Pleasure.

If the Countess knew what I write to you, how severely would she reproach me?

LETTER XXXVII.

I AM extremely sensible, that a Man of your Condition, and especially a military Man, is frequently exposed to bad Company, and consequently sometimes led to visit those Goddesses you mention. But for all this, you have not behaved amiss. I should certainly have reproached you, if I was not certain that, in the Condition which your Heart is in at present, the Heroines of the Stage cannot be dangerous to you. But you tell me, that the Countess is less indulgent. Indeed I am not surprized at her Jealousy, and.

and it confirms me in the Opinion I have of Metaphysicians. I see how much their Sincerity is to be depended upon. Her Complaints are of a very singular Nature; for, in short, what is it that these Ladies take from her? They are by no means Women of Sentiment; and to Sentiments alone the Countess is attached.

How inconsistent the Women are with themselves! They affect to despise the Girls of the Stage; but they are too much afraid of them, only to despise them. But after all, are they in the wrong to fear them? Are not you more pleased with the Freedom of their Conversation, than with that of a sensible Woman, who will allow nothing but Decency and Uniformity? With the former, the Men are entirely at their Ease, and seem to be in a State the most natural to them; with the latter, they are under a Restraint, are careful of what they do, and act as it were a Part on the Stage. I even see, by the Description I have had of some of them, that they are very capable of making you become false to the Mistress you love best.

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But in a sensible Man, this Fault, if I may call it one, ought not to be lasting. They may be able to raise a sudden Desire, but never a real Passion.

These Ladies then would be but too dangerous, if they had Charms of Mind or Humour to amuse you always, as much as they did the first Time that you saw them. If they have never so little Tongue, Address, and Decency of Behaviour, it is hardly possible but they must please you at first. The Freedom of their Conversation, the Vivacity of their Flights, and the Blunders they commit, all this throws you into a Situation which pleases you. You are inspired with a frolicksome Joy, and the Hours you pass with them appear only as so many Moments. But happily for you, they hardly ever have a sufficient Fund to support so amusing an Entertainment. As all of them want Education and Improvement, they very soon run over the narrow Circle they had to describe. The same Jest, the same Stories, the same apish Tricks, are returned upon you; and People seldom laugh twice at the same

same thing, when they have no Esteem for the Person who entertains them.

The Countess may make herself very easy. I know you well enough to be answerable for you, that these are not the Women which she ought to fear: There are others still more formidable, *viz.* the Gallantish Ladies. These are a kind of equivocal Beings in Society; they keep the middle Rank between the Women of Sense, and those I have been speaking of. They keep Company with the former, and differ only from the latter externally. More voluptuous than tender, they seduce, by mixing with less delicate Sentiments an Air of Passion, which they impose upon you for Love. They know how to give an Impression of Tenderness to that which is only a Taste for Pleasure. They make you believe, that it is out of Choice, and from an Acknowledgment of your Merit, that they surrender themselves; so that if you do not know them to be Women of that Stamp, it is impossible for you to discover that Cast, which distinguishes the true Motive of their Actions, from a Sensibility of Heart. You take for
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an Excess of Passion, that which with them is only an Intoxication of the Senses. You think you are beloved, because you are amiable; but the true Reason of it is, because you are a Man. These are the Women which I should be afraid of, in behalf of the Countess. The Financiere*, who introduced herself lately into her Company, is of this Number; and I have already convicted her of it. I remember in your preceding Letter, you mentioned to me those Allurements which she threw in your Way; at which the Countess was not to blame for taking Umbrage. Your Passion for this last I know is too strong, not to make you sacrifice every thing to it. But I am afraid, lest you should not continue always so honourable. Madam de — has a certain Freshness and Gaiety about her. She is of an Age, when the Women gladly take upon them the Task of entering young Men into the World, and of giving them the first Lessons of Gallantry. That engaging

* This signifies a Farmer of the Revenue's Lady; and as we have no Word analogous to it in *English*, I have therefore retained the Original.

and obliging Air which you observe in her, will have its Effect; but I advise you to guard against it. People sometimes attach themselves to Women of that Character, while they think they only despise them. Nay, they even frequently find out the Secret, to make you commit more Follies than all the rest of the Sex.

L E T T E R XXXVIII.

I AM impatient to inform you, Sir, that I have just been supporting an Argument against *M. de la Bruyere*. You will doubtless admire my Assurance; but it is true for all that. He alledged, that *Corneille* had painted Mankind as they ought to be, and *Racine* such as they really are; of which I asserted the direct contrary. There were several illustrious Spectators of this Dispute, and I had the greatest Number of Votes in my Favour, which I was not a little proud of. But as a Detail of this would be too long to write to you, come and you shall have it by word of Mouth. Every one has his own manner of Painting, and I have
mine

mine likewise. I represent the Women as they really are, and am sorry I cannot make them such as they would appear to be. But in answer to your Letter.

I am not all surprized at that kind of Languor which you suffer. The Marchioness's Illness has deprived you of the Pleasure of seeing her Relation, so that your Heart has remained in the same Situation for the Space of three Days, and you have gained very little by your Disquiet. Nor am I more surprized at the Coldness you are seized with for the Countess. In the strongest Passions, People are taken with Fits of Indifference, which are even surprizing to those who feel them. Whether it be that the Heart, by being constantly agitated by the same Motion, grows weary at last, or that it is absolutely incapable of being incessantly filled with the same Object, there are Moments of Indifference, of which it would be in vain to search out the Cause. The more violent that these Commotions have been, the more profound is the Calm which succeeds them; and this Calm is always more hurtful to the Object beloved, than the Storm
and

and Agitation. Love is extinguished by too severe or too uniform a Resistance. An ordinary Woman knows only how to resist, but a Woman of Understanding does still more; she varies her manner of resisting, which is the Sublime of the Art. Besides, the Countess prefers the Duties of Friendship to those which she owes a Lover; and this is a new Reason for your Coldness for her. Love is a jealous and tyrannical Passion, which is not satisfied but when the Object beloved sacrifices every Taste and Passion to it. You do nothing at all for it, unless you do every thing. If you prefer Duty, Friendship, &c. to it, it thinks it has a Right to complain, and endeavours to avenge itself. The Civilities which you force yourself to shew to Madam de —, are a Proof of this. I could wish, that you had not pushed it so far as to go along with her to the Countess. The Time which you staid there, the Pleasure you took to entertain her, and the Questions she put to you on the Condition of your Heart, all conspire to prove what I observed to you in my last Letter. You may protest as strongly as you
I please,

please, that all this only served to make you more in Love with the Countess: Your Confusion, when she asked you, if you staid long with your Financiere, the Inclination you had to impose upon her by an equivocal Answer, and even the Care you took to dissipate the least Suspicions she might have, persuade me that you are more blameable than you say you are, or even than you imagine yourself to be. The Countess is sensible of the Consequence of all this. Do not you see the Affectation with which she endeavours to make you jealous, by praising the Chevalier, your ancient Rival? To conclude, I will answer for it, that you shall not soon relapse into these Fits of Languor which we have been speaking of. Jealousy will cut out Work for you for a long Time to come. And pray do you look upon the Disaster of the Marchioness as nothing at all? You will soon see, that the Small-pox has not disfigured her Face alone, but her Temper will be quite different, when she comes to be acquainted with all her Misfortune. I am very sorry for her, and for the whole Sex. How cordially will she hate them,
and

and tear them to Pieces! The Countess is at present her greatest Favourite; but will she continue to be so long? She is so beautiful, her Complexion is so capable of making that of others appear ugly. What Storms do I foresee!

I had almost forgot to reproach you very roughly for your Behaviour with regard to me. You had it seems the Indiscretion to shew my last Letters to M. *de la R. F. C.* I shall leave off writing to you, if you continue to blab my Secrets. I should be very glad to communicate my Ideas to him by word of Mouth; but I am far from flattering myself so much, as to think that I write elegantly enough to bear the Examination of such a Reader.

L E T T E R XXXIX.

DOES the Redness then, which the Small-pox has left upon the Face of the poor Marchioness, render her very unsociable? I am not surprized at her Resolution not to go into Company for some time to come. How can she appear in that Con-

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dition?

dition? If this Accident which mortifies her, had not happened, how often must the poor Chevalier have still suffered? Does not this prove, that the Virtue of the Women depends upon Circumstances, and that it diminishes with their Pride? But I am afraid, lest such an Example should have a bad Effect on the Countess. Nothing is more dangerous to a Woman, than the Weaknesses of her Friend. Love, already too deceitful of itself, becomes still more so by Contagion, if I may use the Expression. It is not in the Heart alone that it takes its Force; it borrows fresh Arms against Reason, from all the Objects which surround it. The Person who becomes culpable, thinks herself interested, for her own Justification, to conduct her Friend to the same Precipice; and I am no longer surprized at every thing which the Marchioness says in your Favour. Hitherto they have acted upon the same Principles. What a Shame is it for the Marchioness, that the Countess alone is secured by them! The Marchioness has, besides, one Reason more than another Woman at present to lend her Assistance towards
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the Defeat of her Friend. She has lost her Beauty, and consequently is obliged to preserve her Lover by her extraordinary Concessions. Should she suffer another to retain hers at a less Expence, it would be knowledging a Superiority too mortifying to her; and I am very certain, she would do any thing in the World to make your lovely Widow behave in the same manner. Should she happen to prevail, I have just Reason to fear, lest every thing should change its Appearance. To have been as handsome as another Woman, and to be so no more, while she dresses out every Day, and to suffer to be constantly with her; this, I can assure you, is a Trial not to be endured by the most sensible Woman, and one whose Philosophy is the most refined. With us, Friendship either terminates or begins Rivalship: I mean the Rivalship of Charms only. It would be too much to add to it that of Passion.

I foresee it with Regret; but I ought to tell you of it, that whatever Precautions the Countess may take, in order to preserve the Love of the Marchioness, she will never

turn out any thing but ungrateful. I do not know by what Fatality it happens, that whatever a handsome Woman says to one who is so no more, or who never has been so, takes in her Mouth a Tincture of Commiseration, which baffles all the Precautions she can use, and which mortifies always her whom she strives to make easy under the Loss of her Charms. The more she seems willing to yield the Superiority she has over the poor unfortunate Lady, the more it is confirmed to her; so that from that Time, it is only by her Generosity that she appears to hold that subaltern Merit which is left to her. In short, Sir, I can assure you, that the Women always deceive themselves, in those Praises which they bestow upon one another; and all of them know how to value those Encomiums which they receive from each other. Thus, as they speak without Sincerity, they listen without Gratitude; and tho' she who speaks, praises the Beauty of another with the greatest Sincerity, the Person who receives the Praise, in order to judge of its being sincere, examines much less what the other says to her, than the Figure of her Person.

Person. Is she ugly? we believe her, and love her. Is she as handsome as we? we thank her coldly, and disdain her. Is she handsomer? we hate her still more than we did before. We may then be well assured, that while two Figures have any Difference to decide between them, it is impossible that a solid Friendship should be formed betwixt them. Can two Merchants, who deal in the same Stuff, ever become good Neighbours? But we cannot always penetrate into the true Cause of this want of Cordiality in the Women. They who seem to be the most intimately connected with each other, quarrel sometimes for almost nothing at all. Do you imagine, that this Trifle was the Occasion of the Quarrel? It was only a Pretext for it. We conceal the Motive of our Actions, when the discovering it would only serve to mortify us. We do not chuse to have it known, that it is the Uneasiness which the Beauty of our Friend occasions, that gives us this Shyness. This would make us appear jealous and envious, which is a Pleasure we will not allow her, and we rather chuse to appear unjust. Whenever it happens then

that two handsome Women are happy enough to find a Pretext for falling out, they catch at it so eagerly, and detest each other with such Earnestness, as proves how much they loved one another before.

Pray, Sir, do I express myself frankly enough to you? You see how far my Sincerity carries me. I endeavour to give you just Ideas of every thing, even at my own Expence; for I am surely no more exempted than others, from those very Failings which I sometimes criticise. But as I am well persuaded, that all this will remain buried betwixt us, I am not afraid of being lugged into a Quarrel with my Sex, which would possibly think it had a Right to blame my Ingenuity. The Countess is however above all these little Narrownesses, and heartily assents to the Truth of what I have told you. But there are few Women who are able to come up to her.

L E T -

LETTER XL.

THE Example then of the Marchion-
ess, has no Effect yet upon the Heart
of her Friend. It seems, on the contrary,
that she is more upon her Guard against you,
and you have drawn her Displeasure upon
you, by the slight Favour you have snatch-
ed from her. I imagined, she would not
fail on this Occasion to recal to your Mind
those Protestations of Respect and Disinte-
restedness, which you made when you first
declared your Passion to her. This is very
common in such a Case. But what is very
singular here is, that the same forward Ad-
vances, which a Woman looks upon as a
Proof of want of Respect, before she is well
acquainted with you, should be converted,
in her Imagination, into a Testimony of
Love and Esteem, as soon as Affairs are
settled betwixt you. Do but hear the mar-
ried Women, and all those who, tho' they
are unmarried, indulge themselves in the
same Prerogatives ; I say, do but hear their
private Complaints against their unfaithful

Husbands and Lovers, who are become cold. It is because they despise them; this is the only Reason which they give; while in the mean time, amongst Friends, that which they looked upon as a Mark of Esteem and Civility, was it any thing else but quite the Reverse? I told you some time ago, that the Women themselves, when they are sincere, make Love to consist still more than you do in the Effervescence of the Blood. Examine a Mistress at the beginning of an Amour; then Love is a Sentiment purely metaphysical, with which the Senses have nothing at all to do. Like those Philosophers, who, in the Midst of Torments, would not confess that they felt any Pain, she continues a long time a Martyr to her own System; but at last, by struggling to support her Chimera, the poor Woman allows herself to be taken in. Her Lover may repeat to her as often as he pleases, that Love is a metaphysical and divine Passion; that it lives upon fine Phrases, and mystical Discourses; that it would be degrading it, to mix with it any thing material and human: He may boast as much as he pleases of his
Respect

Respect and Delicacy, but I will answer for all the Sex, without Exception, that such an Orator will never make his Fortune. They will take his Respect for an Insult, his Delicacy for a Mockery, and his fine Discourses for ridiculous Pretexts. All the Favour they will grant him, will be to quarrel with him for having been less delicate to some others; and thereby he will put himself under the dire Necessity of displaying his high Sentiments before his titular Mistress: and what is admirable in all this is, that the Excuse which they furnish him with, always proceeds from the same Principle.

P. S. What a deal of Regard you pay to my Requests? You not only shew my Letters to *M. de la R. F. C.* but you even read them openly in Company. It is true, that the favourable Judgment which my Friends pass upon them, makes me some small Amends for your Indiscretions; and I see plainly, that the best thing I can do, is to go on as before. But, at least, be upon your Guard, whenever I mention any thing to you, in which the Honour of the Countess

is concerned. If you don't take care of this, I shall write to you no more.

L E T T E R XLI.

NO, Sir, whatever you may say of it, I cannot excuse that Eagerness, with which you desire what you call supreme Happiness. Will you never be convinced, that when you are sure of a Woman's Heart, it is your Interest to enjoy her Defeat a long while, before it is rendered compleat? Shall I never make you sensible, that of all Pleasures, the Sweets of Love must be used with the greatest Œconomy? If I was a Man, and happy enough to have melted the Heart of such a Woman as the Countess, with what Discretion would I make use of the Advantages I had gained? Through how many Gradations would I oblige myself to pass successively, and even slowly! How many Pleasures, which are unknown to the Men, would I create! Like the Miser, I would incessantly contemplate my Treasure, put a just Value upon the Worth of it, be sensible that it constituted my whole Happiness, place all my Felicity in possessing it,
in

in considering it as my own, and to be disposed of as I please ; and in the mean time, put on a firm Resolution never to spend it. What Satisfaction must it give you, to read in the Eyes of an amiable Woman the Power which you have over her ; to behold in her most trifling Actions a Mark of Tenderness, whenever they relate to you ; to hear her Voice soften, whenever she speaks either of you or to you ; to enjoy her Uneasiness at the least Eagerness you discover to serve her, and her Confusion on account of your most innocent Caresses ? Is it possible there can be a more delightful Situation, than that of a Lover who is sure that he is beloved ? And can one be more so, than in these very Instances ? How must it charm him, to be expected with an earnest Impatience ! to be received with a Transport, which must be still the more pleasing to him, by the Effort which is made to prevent his observing it ! She dresses herself according to what she believes to be his Taste ; and she puts on the Look, Tone and Manner which is the most agreeable to him. Formerly she dressed to please Mankind in ge-

neral ; but now entirely to please him. 'Tis for him she puts on this Egret, this Ribband, and this Bracelet. He is the Object of all : she transforms herself in a manner to him, and loves him as it were in herself. Can any thing in Love be more enchanting, than the Resistance of a Woman who intreats you not to take the Advantage of her Weakness, and who is willing to owe even her Virtue to you ? In a word, can there be any thing more bewitching, than a Voice almost quite stifled with Emotion ; than those Repulses, which a Mistress reproaches herself for, and the Severity of which she endeavours to soften by the most tender Looks, even before you can complain of her ? How can you consent to see such an Enchantment so soon finished ? I am not able to conceive how you can do it. In the mean time it is certain, that whenever we yield to your Carresses, all these Pleasures weaken in Proportion to the want of Resistance which you meet with. It was entirely in your Power alone to prolong them, and even to encrease them, by allowing yourself Time to know and taste all the Sweetness of them ; but you
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are not satisfied, unless the Possession be absolute, easy and uninterrupted. And after this, you are surprized to find Indifference, Coldness and Inconstancy in your Heart. Have not you done all in your Power to cloy yourself with the beloved Object? I have always told you, that Love never dies of Want, but frequently of Indigestion. Some other time I will communicate to you that Passion I felt for the Count de ———. You will then be sensible, how a Passion ought to be conducted, in order to render the Enjoyment of it lasting. You will see whether or not I know the Heart, and wherein its true Felicity consists. You will learn by my Example, that to husband well our Passions, is the only reasonable metaphysical System in Love. In a word, you will know how little you understand your true Interest, with regard to your present Conduct with the Countess. But in order to disappoint your Projects, I intend to visit her as often as I can. You must not take this amiss, and still tell me that I am retained on both Sides; for I am firmly persuaded,
that

that by doing this, I shall act for the Good of both Parties concerned.

LETTER XLII:

WHAT! I sympathize with you, Sir! I shall beware of that, I assure you. You did not think proper to follow my Advice, and it gives me no Concern that the Countess has used you ill. You imagined, that you had nothing more to do, than to behave bluntly to her. The careless manner in which she treated Love, the Easiness of her Conversation, the indulging a Number of your Follies, and the Frankness with which she rallied the *Platonists*, all this made you hope to find her less severe; but you are now at length convinced of your Mistake. All these outward Appearances, were only so many deceitful imposing Charms. To circumvent in this manner the Integrity of People ——! I must own such Behaviour cries aloud for Vengeance, and well deserves all the Epithets you give it.

But are you willing that I should speak to you with my usual Frankness? If so, I must
· tell

tell you, that you are guilty of an Error which is but too general amongst your Sex. You Men judge of us only by external Appearances. You imagine that a Woman whose Virtue is not always on the Watch, may be more easily overcome than a Prude ; and even Experience itself does not convince you of the contrary. By this means, how often are you exposed to Repulses, so much the more mortifying, as they were so little expected ? Your Resource is then to accuse the Women of Caprice and Singularity. You all express yourselves in the same manner, and say, what can be the Reason of this ambiguous Behaviour ? No Woman is determined to remain inflexible ; to what Purpose then should she impose upon the Credulity of her Lover ? Why is not her outward Behaviour conformable to her Sentiments ? In a word, why does she allow herself to love, when she is willing to dispense with a Return of Passion ? Is not this being really whimsical and false ? Is it not in reality making a Mock of a Passion ?

You are mistaken, Gentlemen, it is making a Mock of your Vanity. In vain do
you

you attempt, in this Case, to lay the Blame upon us. 'Tis the Woman alone that is injured, and, on this Occasion, you only speak to us of Passion on purpose to aggrandize things which hardly bear any Resemblance to it. Besides, is it not yourselves who force us to treat you thus? Let a Woman have never so little Understanding, she knows that Hope is the strongest Tye that can attach you to her, and therefore she allows you to lay hold of it. If she was to behave at first with a Severity capable of making her to be looked upon as invincible, from that Time no Lover would ever come nigh her. What a solitary Situation must she henceforth be in! and what Shame must she suffer! For the Woman who is endowed with the greatest Share of Virtue, is not therefore the less sensible of the Desire of pleasing, nor does she glory less in making herself adored. But being very sensible that those whom she expects should pay her such Regard, are only induced to do it from Views which mortify her Pride; and not being able to reform this Defect, the only Method left for her is to take Advantage of it, in order to fix her Admirers.

Admirers. She knows how to keep them, by not destroying those very Hopes; which, however, she is determined never to satisfy. Thus, by the means of Address, she succeeds. And thus, when a Woman understands her true Interest, she says to herself, what the Countess owned to me in our last Conversation, “ I know very well what Regard one
“ ought to pay to the Men’s saying *I love*
“ *you*, and am very sensible what it means
“ at the Bottom. It must therefore be my
“ Fault, if I am not offended at it; but as
“ soon as we have discovered them, there
“ is only need of Vanity to disconcert their
“ Designs. Our Anger, when they offend
“ us, is by no Means the most formidable
“ Weapon we can oppose to them. Who-
“ ever is obliged to call in foreign Assistance,
“ or to be in a Passion, in order to resist
“ them, discovers her Weakness. An art-
“ ful Irony, a smart Raillery, or a mortify-
“ ing Coldness; these are the things
“ which discourage them. We never
“ ought to enter into any Quarrels with
“ them, and consequently there will be no
“ Occasion for Reconcilements. What
Advan-

“ Advantages would this manner of Pro-
“ ceeding deprive them of ?

“ The Prude, I must confess, follows an-
“ other Course. When she finds herself
“ exposed to the least Attack, she thinks
“ she does not act a reasonable Part, but
“ in Proportion to the Resentment which
“ she discovers. But to what Purpose does
“ she impose upon herself this Conduct ?
“ Every Man, who is acquainted with the
“ Secret, says, I am only used ill, because
“ I have been unlucky in timing my Attack.
“ 'Tis my bad Address which she punishes,
“ and not my Rashness. Another Time
“ she will thank me, for what she accuses
“ me To-day. These Severities are only
“ a Hint to make me redouble my Care,
“ in order to deserve more Indulgence, and
“ disarm her Pride. There is no Fear but
“ she will be appeased ; and the only Me-
“ thod in this Case of making her forget
“ the Offence, is to ask Pardon, and be-
“ come guilty a second Time. But by fol-
“ lowing my Method, I am satisfied a Man
“ will never give himself the Airs of rea-
“ soning in this manner.

“ The

“ The Marquiss, for Example, has some-
“ times discovered in his Eyes his respectful
“ Intentions. The only way I took of pu-
“ nishing it, was to seem not to understand
“ him, and by that means I have insensibly
“ turned his Thoughts on other Objects.
“ This Method always succeeded, till the
“ last time he visited me ; and then indeed
“ it was impossible for me to dissemble with
“ him. He wanted to honour me with
“ some Familiarities, which I immediately
“ put a Stop to ; but without being in a
“ Passion. I thought it better to guard
“ myself by Reason than by Passion, and
“ therefore appeared to be more concerned
“ than irritated ; and I am satisfied that
“ my Grief touched him more, than the
“ sharpest Reproaches could possibly have
“ done. He went away a good deal out of
“ Humour ; and now see what Stuff the
“ Heart is made of ! On his first going out,
“ I thought I had lost him for ever. I was
“ even tempted to reproach myself for my
“ Cruelty, and discovered that I had acted
“ rather too severely. But presently my
“ Reflection set me to rights ; for is there
“ any

“ any Instance of Severity having ever produced Inconstancy ? ”

In short, Sir, we talked upon this Subject till we were quite out of Breath ; and I am convinced from what the Countess told me, that her Resolution is fix'd. You may complain of her Injustice, and call her fantastical and inhuman, as long as you please, but she will never yield to the Pleasures of Love, except to such only as do not in the least mortify her Pride. And I see she will follow this Resolution, with more Firmness than I imagined. The Loss of your Heart would, doubtless, be a Misfortune to her, which she would never forget ; but, on the other hand, the Terms of your Perseverance appear to her too hard to be accepted ; and, therefore, she is willing to compound the Matter with you. She hopes to be able to fix you, without betraying her Honour ; which to be sure is a Project worthy of her Courage, and I wish it may succeed better than the Plan which she formed to guard herself against Love. But we must wait the Event.

Shall

Shall we see you then To-morrow, with the President ——'s Widow? If you should have but the least Opportunity of putting in a Word there, I do not at all doubt, but you may make your Peace with the Countess.

L E T T E R XLIII.

I Should never have expected this, Sir: What! has my Zeal for you brought upon me nothing but Reproaches! And I communicate to the Countess how much you are out of Humour at her Severity! I would have you know that, if what you tell me had any Foundation, nothing could provoke me more, than that ironical Tone with which you exalt my Principles. But in order to render me, as you do, responsible for your Success, have you been able to fancy, even for one Moment, that my Intention in writing to you has ever been to instruct you how to lead others astray? Do you make no Difference then, between teaching you to please, and teaching you to seduce? It is true, I have told you the Motives

tives which determined the Women to love ; but did I say, they were the more easy to be overcome on that account ? Did I advise you to attack them by the Senses ; and in attacking them, to suppose them void of Delicacy ? I do not believe I did. When your Inexperience and Timidity might make you appear ridiculous before them, I shewed you the Hurt which those Failings might do you in the World, and at the same time advised you to gather more Assurance, so as to arrive insensibly at that noble and respectful Confidence, with which you ought to behave in the Company of the Women. But as soon as I observed that you carried your Designs too far, and that they might affect the Reputation of the Countess, I did not dissemble with you, I took her Part against you ; and there could be nothing more reasonable, as I was then become her Friend. You see how unjust you are with regard to me ; and you are no less so with regard to the Countess. You treat her as a Person of an ambiguous Character. To hear you, one would think that she was neither determined for nor against Gallantry ;

and that what you have observed the plainest in her Conduct is, that she is a more rational Coquette than other Women. A fine Opinion truly! But one must make some Allowances for your Situation. However, I must say, that an unprejudiced Person will see in the Countess, a Mistress as reasonable as she is tender; a Woman who, without having a vain Shew of Virtue, is not the less firmly attached to it: In a word, a Woman who earnestly searches after the most proper Means to reconcile Love with her Honour. 'Tis no small Difficulty, to connect those two Contrarieties; and from this Source flow those Inequalities of Behaviour which disgust you. Imagine to yourself the Struggles she must have, the Struggles she must suffer, and the Trouble she must be at to preserve a Lover, whom too uniform a Resistance might in the End deprive her of. Besides, she is not certain of fixing you by resisting; for you are sometimes so very whimsical, as to leave off the Encounter, when the Resistance is long continued. In the very mean time that you are praising our Virtue, you desert us, and then what Shame do

do we suffer! How many Women have surrendered, to avoid a Misfortune of this Consequence! But since, in neither Case, it is certain that we shall be able to secure our Lover, we ought at least to prefer that Inconveniency, which allows us still to preserve his Heart and Esteem. This is our Opinion; for the Countess and I are precisely of the same way of thinking. Be then, Sir, more equitable, and sympathize rather than find fault with her. If her Character was less fixed, perhaps you might like her better; but would you do it long? I doubt it very much. Adieu. We expect to see you this Evening with Madam *de la Fayette*, and to find you there in better Temper.

To-morrow is to be introduced to me, the Abbé *Gedoy*n. I shall have a brilliant Assembly. But you will doubtless be uneasy there, because you will not see the only Object that can delight you; and you will say of my Apartment, that which *Malherbe* has said so prettily of the *Louvre*:

“ *Mais*

“ Mais quoique vous ayez, vous n’avez point

“ Caliste,

“ Et moi je ne vois rien, quand je ne la vois

“ pas.”

But whate’er you possess, *Calista’s* not there ;
And, for me, I see nothing, when I see not
the Fair.

L E T T E R XLIV.

A Calm has, it seems then, succeeded to the Storm ; and I find by your Letter, that you are better pleased with the Countess than with yourself. How powerful is Reason, when pronounced by the Lips of a Woman one adores ! You see what different Effects the Behaviour of our Friend, and that of her Kinswoman, produce : The Severity of the former, has increased your Esteem and Love for her ; while the Bounties of the Marchioness, have rendered the Chevalier perfidious. This is very commonly the Case with the Men, and Ingratitude is generally the Reward of our Favours. This Misfortune, in the mean time, is not always

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without

without a Remedy ; and on this Occasion I will communicate to you a Letter, which I received some Days ago from M. de St. Evremont, with whom you know I have always had an intimate Correspondence.

The young Count de —, married Mademoiselle de —, with whom he was desperately in Love. He complained to me one Day, that Marriage, and the Possession of the Object beloved, almost always weakened, and frequently even destroyed the most tender Passion. We debated a long while upon this Subject ; and as I wrote the same Day to M. de St. Evremont, I took it into my Head to ask his Opinion of the Matter. His Answer was as follows* :

Letter of M. de St. Evremont, to Mademoiselle de Lenclos.

“ I am entirely of your Opinion, Madam, that Marriage, or the Possession of the Object beloved, does not always destroy Love, as is commonly imagined ;

* I thought proper to relate here only that Part of M. de St. Evremont's Letter, which concerns the Subject mentioned by Mademoiselle de Lenclos.

“ but the want of Discretion in the Ma-
“ nagement of our Passions; the too en-
“ tire, easy, and uninterrupted Possession of
“ what we wished for; these are the true
“ Sources of those Disgusts which we find
“ to arise in Love. When we give
“ ourselves up, without Reserve, to all
“ the Excesses of a Passion, these violent
“ Emotions of the Soul cannot fail of leav-
“ ing it soon quite deserted. Then the
“ Heart finds itself disquieted and cold for
“ want of Action. In vain do we look
“ abroad for the Causes of that Calm which
“ succeeds our Transport; we do not see,
“ that a Happiness more equal and durable
“ would have been the Fruit of our Mode-
“ ration. Make but an exact Analysis of
“ what passes within you when you wish for
“ any thing, and you will find, that your
“ Desires are nothing else than a real *Cur-*
“ *iosity*. This Curiosity is the Spring of
“ the Heart; and when it is satisfied, our
“ Desires presently vanish. Whoever there-
“ fore would fix a Husband or a Lover, ought
“ to leave him always something to desire;
“ every Day ought to promise him some

“ Novelty for To-morrow. Do but diver-
 “ sify his Pleasures, and procure to him the
 “ Charms of Variety in the same Object,
 “ and I will answer for his Perseverance and
 “ Fidelity.

“ I must own, in the mean time, that
 “ Marriage, or that which is called your
 “ Defeat, is, *in an ordinary Woman*, the very
 “ Grave of Love. But in this case, the
 “ Lover is less to be blamed than she who
 “ complains of his Coldness. She imputes
 “ that to the Corruption of his Heart,
 “ which is only owing to her own want of
 “ Conduct and Oeconomy. She has spent
 “ in one Day, all that could gratify the
 “ Taste which she had excited. She has
 “ nothing left to feed the Curiosity of her
 “ Lover. She is always the same Statue ;
 “ there is no Variety to be expected from
 “ her. Her Lover knows her as it were
 “ by Heart. But, *in a Woman such as I*
 “ *imagine*, it is the Morning of the most
 “ delightful Day, and there begins the most
 “ satisfactory of all Pleasures. I mean those
 “ Disclosings of the Heart, those recipro-
 “ cal Confidences which place the Soul in so
 “ charm-

“ charming a Situation ; those innocent
“ Freedoms and Confessions, which escape
“ us ; those Transports, which the Assurance
“ of constituting the whole Happiness, and
“ meriting all the Esteem of the Person
“ beloved, excite in us. In a word, that
“ Day is an *Epocha* when the delicate Man
“ begins to discover inexhaustible Treasures,
“ which till that Moment had been carefully
“ concealed from him. The Freedom
“ which a Woman acquires on this Occa-
“ sion, makes her display those Sentiments
“ which Restraint had confined : Her Heart
“ begins to take Flight, but a Flight well
“ conducted. Time, far from occasioning
“ Disgust, only furnishes new Reasons for
“ making her the more beloved. But at
“ the same time, I suppose that she has Reso-
“ lution enough to subdue her Inclination.
“ For, in order to fix a Lover, it is not
“ sufficient (or rather it is perhaps too much)
“ to love him to Distraction. She must
“ endeavour to love him with Prudence and
“ Discretion ; and for this Reason, Modesty
“ is the most ingenious Quality which deli-
“ cate People have ever thought of. But

“ to deliver herself up to the Violence of
“ her Passion, to annihilate herself in the
“ beloved Object, (if I may be allowed the
“ Expression) is acting the Part of a Mistress
“ without Judgment. This is not ma-
“ naging Love properly; 'tis only loving
“ for a Moment, and the way to make a
“ spoiled Child of a Lover very soon. I
“ would have a Woman conduct herself
“ with more Reserve and Discretion. The
“ Excess of her Fondness, does not all justi-
“ fy her, in my Opinion. The Heart is al-
“ most always like a fiery Courser, whose
“ Mettle ought to be very well managed.
“ If you do not husband its Force well, its
“ Vivacity will spend itself in a slight Tran-
“ sport. The same Indifference which you
“ observe in a Lover after these violent Emo-
“ tions, you will experience yourself, and
“ you will both very soon feel the Necessity
“ of leaving each other. In a word, it re-
“ quires more Parts than People imagine to
“ love, and to be happy in loving. Ever
“ till the fatal *Yes* is pronounced, or, if you
“ rather chuse it, till her Defeat, the Wo-
“ man has no need of Artifices to preserve
her

“ her Lover. Curiosity excites, Desire sup-
“ ports, and Hope encourages him. But
“ as soon as he is once happy, it belongs to
“ the Mistress to be at as much Pains to keep
“ him, as he was at before to vanquish her.
“ The Desire of fixing him, must make
“ her exert her Ingenuity. The Heart may
“ be considered as a great Office, the
“ gaining of which is less difficult than the
“ keeping it. To render a Man amo-
“ rous, Charms only are required; but
“ there is something more wanted in order
“ to keep him constant; there must be Ad-
“ dress, good Conduct, a great deal of good
“ Sense, and even a certain Mixture of
“ pettish Humour and Fickleness. But un-
“ fortunately the Women, after they have
“ yielded, are rather too tender, and indeed
“ too fond. Perhaps it would conduce
“ more to the Good of both Parties, if at
“ first they were more complying, and some-
“ what more shy afterwards. I repeat it
“ again, that they will never be able to pre-
“ vent Disgust, but by giving the Hear
“ Leisure to wish. They are constantly
“ complaining, that our Indifference is al-

“ ways the Reward of their Complaisance
“ to us. They perpetually recall to our
“ Minds those Times, when full of Love
“ and Passion, we passed whole Days in
“ their Company. Blind that they are!
“ They do not perceive that it is still in their
“ Power to bring us back to that Situation,
“ the Remembrance whereof is so dear
“ to them. Let them only forget what they
“ have already done for us, and they will
“ not be tempted to do more. Let them
“ but make us forget it, and we will de-
“ mand less. Let them rouse up our Hearts
“ by new Difficulties; let our Disquiets be
“ renewed; in short, let them make us de-
“ sire new Proofs of an Affection, the Cer-
“ tainty of which diminishes the Worth of
“ it in our Eyes. They will then have less
“ Reason to complain of us, and be better
“ pleased with themselves. Do yo desire me
“ to speak my Mind freely to you on the
“ Subject? I will tell you, that Affairs
“ would put on a very different Aspect, if
“ the Women remembered at proper times,
“ that their Province is always to be pressed,
“ and yours to solicit, and to merit new Fa-

“ yours ;

“ vours ; that being formed to be courted,
“ they never ought to make the first Offer.
“ Reserved in the very Excess of Passion,
“ they ought to be careful not to deliver
“ themselves up to it without Discretion.
“ The Lover should still have something to
“ demand, and consequently he would always
“ be submissive to obtain it. An unbounded
“ Condescension, renders even the most
“ tempting Charms of no Price, and in the
“ End, disgusts the very Person who soli-
“ cits. This is a Truth confirmed by Expe-
“ rience. Constant Intercourse puts all
“ Women on a Level : the handsome and
“ the ugly, after their Defeat, differ only
“ in the manner of preserving their Autho-
“ rity. But what is commonly the Case ?
“ A Woman thinks she has no more to do,
“ but to be affectionate, fond, good-hu-
“ moured, even-tempered, and faithful. In
“ one Sense, she is very right ; these Qua-
“ lities ought to be the Foundation of her
“ Character, and they will not fail of mak-
“ ing her esteemed ; but these very Qua-
“ lities, however valuable they may be, if
“ they are not heightened by a Tincture of

“ Inequality of Temper, will not fail at last
“ to extinguish Love, and to produce Cold-
“ ness and Distaste : mortal Poisons to the
“ very best of Hearts.

“ Do you, in short, know why Lovers
“ are so easily disgusted in Prosperity ? and
“ why they enjoy themselves so little, after
“ having been pleased too much ? 'Tis be-
“ cause the two Parties interested, have each
“ an Opinion equally false. The one ima-
“ gines, that there is no more to be obtain-
“ ed ; and the other, that there is nothing
“ more to be bestowed. Whence it neces-
“ sarily follows, that the one slackens his
“ Pursuit, and the other neglects to make
“ herself regarded ; or at least imagines,
“ that it is not possible for her to do it any
“ longer but by solid Qualities. They sub-
“ stitute Reason and Esteem for Love ; and
“ from that Time, there remains nothing
“ poignant in their Intercourse ; no more
“ of those agreeable Quarrels, so necessary
“ to prevent Disgust.

“ But when I say that the stated Course
“ of an amorous Correspondence ought to
“ be enlivened by some Altercations, you
“ must

“ must not think I alledge that, in order to
“ be happy, two Lovers ought always to
“ be quarrelling with each other. I only
“ wish that their Disputes should arise from
“ their Love; that the Woman should not
“ forget, out of a pusillanimous good Na-
“ ture, that Respect and Concern which is
“ due to her, and that by an excessive Sen-
“ sibility, she would not make her Love a
“ Source of Disquiet, capable of embitter-
“ ing the remainder of her Life; nor by
“ a scrupulous Fidelity, make her Lover
“ too secure that he has nothing to fear from
“ that Quarter. In short, she must not,
“ by a Sweetness and unalterable Equality
“ of Temper, have the Weakness to forgive
“ every Failing she observes in him. Ex-
“ perience shews but too frequently, that
“ the Women lose their Lovers, or the
“ Hearts of their Husbands, only by too
“ much Indulgence and Easiness of Tem-
“ per. How badly do they manage! They
“ make a Merit of sacrificing every thing
“ to them; they spoil them, and make
“ them ungrateful. So much Generosity

“ turns at last against them ; and the Men
“ soon accustom themselves to consider as
“ their Right, that which was granted them
“ only as a Favour.

“ You see every Day Women (even some
“ of those who are justly despised) reign
“ with a Sceptre of Iron, treat like Slaves
“ Men who are attached to them, and render them contemptible by domineering
“ over them. And yet these are the Women who are the longest beloved. I am
“ very sensible, that a Woman of good
“ Education will never take it into her Head
“ to follow such an Example ; this military
“ Air is repugnant to Sweetness of Manners, and to that Decency which makes
“ the Charm even, of those very things
“ which lead us astray from Virtue. But
“ let this reasonable Woman relent a little
“ of her Severity, and her Conduct will
“ then remain precisely such as is necessary
“ in order to preserve a Lover. We are
“ Slaves, whom too much Indulgence often
“ renders insolent, and require frequently
“ to be treated like those in *America*. We

“ have at the Bottom of our Hearts a Rule
 “ of Justice, which informs us, that the
 “ Hand which governs us falls heavy upon
 “ us sometimes with Justice, and we are
 “ obliged to it for treating us after this
 “ manner.

“ In short, to conclude, I shall add no
 “ more but this: That in every thing
 “ which comes within the Jurisdiction of
 “ Love, the Ladies ought to be the Sove-
 “ reigns. It is from them that we ought
 “ to expect our Happiness; and they will
 “ infallibly make us happy, as soon as they
 “ know how to govern our Hearts with
 “ Judgment, to moderate their own Inclina-
 “ tions, and to maintain their Autho-
 “ rity, without having it brought into Que-
 “ stion, and making a bad Use of it.”

LET-

LETTER XLV.

I Will tell you in two Words, Sir, what I think of the Letter I sent to you Yesterday. Before a Woman can reap Advantage from the Advice of *M. de St. Evremont*, it is necessary she should have excited a great Passion in her Lover. As to the rest, we shall talk of it more at large whenever you please. I pass now to that which relates to yourself. The Sacrifice which the Countess has required of you, is very well worth the Price you set upon it. To renounce for her a Woman, who by her obliging Behaviour discovers such strong Dispositions to use you well; to renounce her publicly in the Presence of her Rival, and with so little Concern at mortifying the Vanity of the Person slighted, is an Effort which naturally ought not to be executed without a proportionable Reward. She could not have hit upon a more happy Pretence for granting you her Picture. But to pitch upon a Day so remarkable as that, when the Marchioness saw Company for the first Time; to chuse the
Time,

Time when the Financiere was ready equipped to contend the Prize of Beauty with the Woman of Quality ; not to speak to her, but by the bye ; to affect to deliver yourself entirely up to the Pleasure of seeing her Rival ; to entertain this last, and be of her Side ; this is an Outrage never to be pardoned. The Countess, depend upon it, will be revenged on you, and in the cruellest manner possible. Let us now proceed to the second Article of your Letter.

You ask me if the last Favour, or rather the last Fault which we can commit, is a certain Proof that a Woman loves you ? It is, and it is not.

It is, if you love a Woman who was never in Love before, and who has Delicacy and Virtue ; but even in this Case, that Proof will neither be more certain nor more pleasing to you, than all the others which she must have given you of her Inclination towards you. Every thing which is done by a Woman in Love, even those things which are the least essential to outward Appearance, are as certain Marks of her Passion, as that of which the Men make so great Account.

Nay, I will further add, that if this virtuous Woman be of a certain Complexion, even the last Favour will testify less Regard for you, than a thousand other little Condescensions which you think nothing of; for in that Case, she acts more to please herself than you: She is too much interested to listen to you, that you should make a Glory of having persuaded her: a Person of quite a different Stamp might have obtained the same Favour. I know a Woman who allowed herself to be overcome two or three Times, by Persons whom she did not at all love, whilst the Man whom she had the greatest Regard for, never obtained any such Favour. It may therefore happen, that the last Favour shall prove nothing at all of any particular Affection for him who obtains it; on the contrary, the small Resistance he meets with, is often owing to the little Esteem she has for him. We have never a greater Respect for ourselves, than when we are with those whom we esteem; and you may be sure, that it must be a violent Passion which can force a sensible Woman to forget herself before one whose Contempt she is afraid of.

Your

Your pretended Triumph may then have sometimes Causes, which, far from making you vain, would only serve to mortify you, if you did but know them.

We observe, for Example, a Lover ready to despond, and are afraid lest he should leave us, and address himself to some other who will be more yielding; we do not chuse to lose him; for it is always mortifying to see one's self slighted; and therefore we yield, because we cannot find out any other Method of keeping him. We are not willing to have any thing to reproach ourselves with. If he leaves us after this, the Fault is entirely on his Side; for as a Woman attaches herself still more firmly by those Favours which she grants, she imagines that the same will likewise oblige a Man to be grateful. But what Folly is this? Others again surrender from different Motives. Curiosity determines one; she is desirous of knowing what Love is. Another, who has the Advantage of a good Person, wants to fix her Lovers by the Allurement of Pleasure. One takes it into her Head to have a Man, of whom the Conquest flatters her Vanity, and she sacrifices
all

all to attach him to herself. Another, in short, yields to Pity, Opportunities, or Importunities, or the Pleasure of avenging herself on a faithless Lover. What shall I say! the Heart is so fantastical, and the Reasons which determine it so singular and various, that it is impossible to discover all the different Springs that move it. But if we impose on ourselves concerning the means of fixing you, how often do you likewise impose upon yourselves, and deceive yourselves with regard to the Proofs of our Love? If you had a greater Share of Delicacy, you would discover a thousand of them, which indicate more than the most signal Favours.

Tell me, Sir, what have I done to M. *de Coulanges*? He has not come near me this Month past; tho', without jesting, I say a great many obliging things to him when he is with me. He is one of the most amiable Men that I know. I shall be angry with you, if you do not bring him to me at my Return from *Versailles*. I will have him to sing to me himself the last Couplets which he has composed. They say they are quite charming.

L E T -

LETTER XLVI.

YOU are too good, Sir, to take Notice of my Absence. If I did not write to you during my Stay in the Country, it was because I knew you was happy, and the Persuasion of this made me quite easy. I considered, that Love ought to have his Right, as commonly his Reign is not very long; and besides, as Friendship has nothing to do with it, I waited patiently till an Interval of Pleasure should give you Time to read my Letters. Do you know how I was employed during all this while? I amused myself in combining all the Events, which must necessarily happen, in the Situation in which I saw your Society. I foresaw the Countess's Tricks with her Rival, and imagined that it would terminate in an open Rupture. I likewise guessed, that the Marchioness would not take part with the first, and that she would embrace the Quarrel of the other. The Financiere is not quite so handsome as her Rival, which was
a de-

a decisive Reason for her to declare in her Favour, and to support her with Safety. What ought to be the natural Consequence of all this? The Disagreement which has happened between all these Women. Good God! what Revolutions have befallen in so short a Time! It is entirely owing to your good Fortune, that you have escaped them. You find every Day fresh Reasons for loving and esteeming this amiable Countess. Believe me, a Woman of such real Merit, and so engaging in her Person, must always gain upon you the more that she is known. Let nothing then lessen the Esteem which you have for her. You have, I must own, obtained a Confession of her Inclination towards you; but is she the less to be esteemed on that Account? Ought not her Heart, on the contrary, to become more valuable in your Eyes, in Proportion to the Certainty you have of being the only Possessor of it? And tho' you should even obtain those Proofs which we mentioned last of her Passion, do you imagine that you would thereby have a Right to disesteem her?

her? I cannot forbear saying, that young Men like you always provoke me, when they fancy, that they are at liberty to neglect our Sex, and to punish us for our Weakness. Is not this the very Height of Injustice and Wickedness, to insult that very Grief which their Inconstancy has occasioned? Can they not then be inconstant, without being likewise unjust? Ought injurious Proceedings always to follow those Disgusts which they have conceived? If we are guilty, ought he who has reaped the Fruits of our Trespases, and who has occasioned them, to be the Person who punishes us for them? Preserve then for ever those Sentiments which you have for the Countess. Let not a false Notion hurt the Progress they may still make in your Heart. It is not our Defeat which of itself ought to render us despicable in your Eyes. The manner in which we defend ourselves, surrender, and behave afterwards, ought to be the only measure of your Esteem or Contempt for us.

Madam *de la Fayette* has then discovered, that the Subject of my last Letter bordered
a little

a little upon the Licentious. You see what Reflections your Indiscretion has brought upon me. But she does not observe, that I am no more blameable in this, than a Demonstrator in Anatomy. I analyse the metaphysical Man, as he dissects the physical. Do you imagine that he ought to be so scrupulous as to omit in his Lectures those Parts of his Subject, which might give Occasion to Sallies of a loose Imagination in debauched Youth? It is not the Subject, Words, nor even the Ideas of Things, which make the Indecency; 'tis the Intention of him who speaks, and almost always the Depravity of him who hears. Madam *de la Fayette* was certainly the last Person in the World, whom I should suspect of reproaching me in that manner; and I will go to the Countess To morrow, to convince her of her Injustice.

L E T .

L E T T E R XLVII.

DO you imagine that I could be surprized at the new Provocations of the Financiere? I am too well acquainted with the Women for that. You need not make the least doubt, but she employs all the Arts of Coquetry to take you from the Countess. She may possibly have an Inclination for you: but I would not advise you to be vain upon that Score; for the most powerful Motive of her Actions, is, doubtless, the Desire of revenging herself. Her Vanity is interested to punish her Rival, for having obtained the Preference to her. The Women never pardon things of this kind; and if he who is the Subject of the Quarrel, be not the principal Object of their Anger, they have at least Occasion for him, in order to exercise their Resentment upon him. In the Rival of the Countess, you have met precisely with that which you required in this last, in order to remain attached to her. She offers you beforehand the Reward of your Cares for her, which very likely she will bestow upon

upon you ; and I see that you will be void enough of Delicacy to accept of these Offers. It is then writ on the Hearts of all Men, *To the most complying.*

But ought not you to be ashamed to deserve the least Reproach at the Hands of the Countess ? Besides, what kind of Woman is it that you seem to prefer to her ? A Woman void both of Delicacy and Love : A Woman, who is led only by the Allurement of Pleasure ; more vain than sensible ; more voluptuous than tender ; more lively than affectionate. She searches after nothing, and loves nothing in you, excepting your Youth, and the Qualities which attend it.

You are sensible of the great Worth of her Rival ; you know how much you are in the wrong to her ; you allow that you are really a Monster of Ingratitude, and yet you have not Resolution enough to merit Forgiveness. Upon my Word, Sir, I am at a Loss how to comprehend you. I begin to believe, that Madam *de Sevigné* is in the right *, when she says that her Son knows his Duty, and

* See the Letters of Madam *de Sevigné*.

reasons upon it very well ; but that his Passions hurry him away ; so that *it is not his Head which is mad, but his Heart.*

In vain do you put me in Mind of that which I told you formerly, with regard to the negligent manner in which Love ought to be treated : Remember that at that time, I rather diverted myself with some trifling Reflections, than pretended to give you Advice in Form. Remember at the same time, that the Subject in question then was only a slight Passion, and an ordinary Mistress ; but the Case at present is quite different. You may see all the Women in *Paris*, without finding so much as one, who can be compared to her whom you leave so cruelly. And for what Reason do you leave her ? Because her Resistance mortifies your Vanity. What Resource does there remain then henceforward to fix you ?

I nevertheless agree with you, that when a Passion is once extinguished, 'tis a very difficult Matter to rekindle it. *It is no more in one's Power to persist in loving, than it was not to love at first.* I am very sensible of the Truth of all those Maxims ; but I submit to

M

them

them with Regret, when I consider that, upon account of the Cause, you leave the best for the worst ; that you renounce solid Happiness and lasting Pleasures, to deliver yourself up to depraved Appetites, and downright Caprice. But I see very well, that all my Reflections will not reclaim you, and I even begin to fear, lest I should become irksome to you by my Morality ; and to speak the Truth, I believe it is foolish in me to preach up Constancy to you, when it is very certain that you love no more, *and that your Heart is mad.* I therefore give you up to your bad Destiny ; but will nevertheless follow you in your new Rambles. What Purpose would it answer to afflict one's self about it ? Would it be advisable for me to put on the Air of a Pedagogue with you ? Certainly no ; we should both be Losers by it. I should only plague myself, without being able to reform you.

LET-

LETTER XLVIII.

I Will not deny, Sir, that your Procedure, with regard to the Countess, had put me out of Humour with you; and I was tempted to break off a Correspondence with a Man so wicked as you are. But the Readiness with which I yield to your Intreaties, makes me believe that my Friendship for you has a Mixture of Weakness in it. You are in the right, that not to remain attached to you longer than you follow my Advice, would not be acting the Part of a true Friend. The more you are to be pitied, the less ought I to desert you; but one cannot always command one's self on the first Impulse. Whatever Effort I made to represent you to myself less guilty, the Concern I took in the Misfortune of my Friend always got the better of it. There were certain Moments when I could not imagine you to be innocent, considering such a handsome Woman complained of you. But at present, as I see her Situation become every

Day more agreeable, I look upon the Coldness of my last Letter as almost criminal.

I shall content myself then for the future to sympathize with her, without importuning you any more on her account. Thus let us resume our former Strain, if you please. You need not fear my Reproaches any more; for I see they would be altogether as useless as ill-timed.

L E T T E R XLIX.

YOU did not know then, that it is frequently more difficult to shake off a Mistress, than it is to gain one. But, however, you find it to be true at present. Your Disgust for the Financiere only surprises me, in that it did not happen sooner. What! after you knew her Character, could you think that the Despair she affects at seeing your Indifference increase every Day, could ever be the Effect of a real Passion. You still allow yourself to be the Dupe of her Intrigue. I really wonder at, and am sorry for your Blindness. But must there not be something too of Vanity to assist a little

little in strengthening your Illusion? To tell the Truth, it must be a very singular Vanity, to be proud of being beloved by a Woman of such a Stamp. But the Men are so vain, that they would allow themselves to be flattered by the Love of the most abandoned Courtezan. However, be that as it will, let me convince you of your Mistake. A Woman whom you slight, when she is in the Character of your Mistress, in her Grief has only her own Interest in View. She endeavours, by her Tears and Despair, to persuade you that your Person and Merit are the sole Cause of her Affliction; that the Loss of your Heart is to her the greatest of all Misfortunes; and that she sees no body that is capable of making it up to her. But all these Pretences are entirely false. It is not an afflicted Mistress who speaks to you, 'tis a vain Woman, desperate for having been slighted, exasperated at the want of Force in her Charms, anxious to find out the means of replacing you speedily, desirous to give herself an Air of Sensibility, and to appear deserving of a better Fate. In a word, she justifies that Thought of *M. de la*

R. F. C. The Women do not regret their Lovers so much for having loved them, as in order to appear more worthy to be beloved themselves. It is well judged in D—— to bring Passion into the Play. She must certainly have a very singular Opinion of you, to hope to impose this upon you. Have you a Mind to know her? The Chevalier has at present no Intrigue upon his Hands; engage him to succeed you. I am sure, by the next Letter that I shall receive from you, you will tell me with what Ease she got over the Loss of you. A Woman of her Age begins to be afraid, that she shall never again recover what she has lost, and that she shall be obliged to undervalue her Charms, by taking the first that offers. Her Grief may indeed be very sincere; but she certainly imposes upon you with regard to the Motives which she alledges for it. Disengage yourself then from those Chains without Remorse. If you pique yourself upon your Delicacy and Constancy for such an Object, you will appear to me as ridiculous, as you lately appeared culpable in wanting them both upon another Occasion. Remember,
Sir,

Sir, what M. *de Coulanges* told us one Day : Constancy is a Virtue of Men of ordinary Merit. Have they taken Advantage of the Caprice of an amiable Woman, in order to establish themselves in her good Graces? The Consciousness of their ordinary Talents fixes them there ; it intimidates them, and they dare not attempt to please any other. Too happy to have surprized her Heart, they are afraid to abandon a Treasure which they despair of finding again elsewhere. And as the slightest Attention to their want of Merit might undeceive their Mistress with regard to them, what do they do? They set up Constancy for a Virtue, make a Superstition of Love, and engage Reason to preserve to them a Heart, which they owe entirely to Caprice, a lucky Opportunity, or Surprise. Beware of resembling such weak Men as these. Hearts are the current Coin of Gallantry : Amiable Men are the Effects which belong to the Society : Their Destination is to circulate there, and to constitute the Happiness of a great many. A constant Man is then as culpable, as a Miser who stops the Circulation in Commerce. He heaps up a Treasure

useless to himself, whilst others would turn it to very great Advantage.

Besides, what is a Mistress good for who is kept attached to you only by Reason? How insipid is her Company? What Violence a Person does himself, to say that he still loves her, after his Passion is entirely subsided? It is very seldom that Love terminates at the same time on both Sides; and then Constancy is a real Misfortune. I compare it to that Tyrant mentioned in ancient History, who doomed a Man to Death by tying him fast to a Carcass. She condemns you to the same Punishment. Shake off a Prejudice so destructive to the Liberty of Commerce. Take my Advice, follow your Inclination for the President's Widow which you mentioned to me. She will probably be sometimes troublesome to you indeed, but at least she will not degrade you. If, as you tell me, she has as little Wit as she is handsome, her Reign will not be very long. You will then be soon at Liberty again, and I do not in the least doubt, but one or more Intrigues will succeed to this. Nay, perhaps, you will not wait the End of it; for I find by
your

your Letter that you are become quite a Man of the Mode. The new System you have have formed to yourself, makes me the more certain of it, and it is impossible to fall upon a better Method. Never to finish an Intrigue, before you have another begun; not to give up the first, but in Proportion to the Progress you make in the second; nothing can be better concerted than all this. But as, in spite of all those wise Precautions, one may some time or other find one's self unprovided; as some Event, beyond the Bounds of human Foresight, may disconcert these Projects, adopt for a Principle, always to end amicably with your Mistresses for the future, in order that you may always be sure of one at least to employ you during the *interregnums*. I own to you, Sir, that this may be called taking Measures with all imaginable Prudence; and I do not in the least doubt, but you will find your Account in a Plan so wisely concerted. Adieu.

I do not know, upon my Word, how I have the Courage to write such long and foolish Letters to you. I find a secret Charm

in entertaining you, which I should be apt to suspect, if I did not know my Heart very well. However, I reflect that it is entirely disengaged, and intend to beware of you for the future. For you frequently take it into your Head to say tender things to me, and, perhaps, I might take into mine to believe you.

LETTER L.

YOU may make a Jest of it as much as you please, Sir; but I shall persist in telling you, that you are not despised by the President's Widow. I would have you believe, that I see more clearly into your Affairs than you do yourself. I have known a great many Gentlemen, who pretended, like you, with the greatest Sincerity in the World, that they were in Love, and yet in reality were not in the least touched with it. It is the same Case with the Diseases of the Heart, as it is with those of the Body; some of them are real, and others only imaginary. That which attaches you to a Woman is not always Love. The Habit of being together,

ther, the Conveniency of visiting one another, the shunning of one's self, the Necessity of having some Intrigue, the Desire of pleasing, and the Hopes of succeeding; in a word, a thousand other Reasons, which have not the least Resemblance to a Passion, these are, for the most part, what you take for Love, and the Women are always the first to confirm this Error. Perpetually flattered by the Homage which is paid to them, they rarely examine the Motives to which it is owing, provided their Vanity reaps the Benefit of it. After all, are not they in the right? They would almost always be Losers by such an Enquiry.

To these Motives which I have mentioned, you may still add another, which is likewise very capable of deceiving you with regard to the Nature of your Affections. The President's Widow is certainly the handsomest Woman of the Age. She is newly married, and has refused the Addresses of one of the most amiable Men which we know. Nothing surely would flatter your Vanity more, than to make a Conquest which could not fail to give you that Fame you aspire to.

This, my dear Sir, is what you call Love, and you will find it a hard Matter to become sensible of your Mistake; for, by means of persuading yourself that you are touched with it, you will at last believe that the Passion is real. And it would be worth while to see some time or other, with what Dignity you will speak of your pretended Passions, how sincerely you will believe that they deserve an Acknowledgment; and, what will be still more diverting, will be the Respect which perhaps you will imagine is due to them. But, unfortunately, the Event will convince you of your Error, and you will then be the first to laugh at that Air of Importance with which you treated so foolish an Affair.

Shall I tell you how far I push my Injustice towards you? I am fully persuaded, that you will henceforth be no more amorous. You will only, for the future, have slight Inclinations, frivolous Intrigues, and capricious Attachments; all the Arrows of Love will have no Effect upon you. It is true, you will not suffer its Pains; but, at the same time, will you enjoy even the least of its Pleasures? Can you hope ever to
find

find again, in any of your Reveries, those delightful Moments which formerly constituted your supreme Happiness? I have no Inclination to flatter you; but I think I ought to do you this Justice to say, that your Heart is formed for delicate Pleasures. It is not you that I make responsible for the Dissipation in which you live, but the young Fools whom you see. The Abuse which they make of Pleasures they call Enjoyment, and you are led astray by their Example. But this Delirium will wear off sooner or later, and you will very soon see, at least I wish you may, that you are doubly deceived with regard to the Condition of your Heart. You have imagined, that it was smitten with the President's Widow, but you will discover your Mistake. You thought that it was no longer sensible to the Charms of -----, but I will still stand to what I have said. A Time perhaps will come, when I shall be able to explain myself more freely upon this Head. I now proceed to answer the rest of your Letter.

You must own, that you was very much disengaged this Morning, to amuse yourself
with

with reading my Letters over again. Nay, you must even have been out of Humour, to set about criticising them. You have certainly been disappointed of some agreeable Party, or some pleasing Engagement. But I will not elude the Difficulty which you start. I appear to you then to contradict myself sometimes. If I should own, that this might very well be the Case, and make you the same Answer which M. de la Bruyere made to some Critics the other Day, *It is not I who contradict myself, but the Heart upon which I reason*; could you thence fairly conclude, that all that I have said to you is entirely false? I do not believe it. But what Wonder is it, if led astray by those various Situations in which you have lately been, I should appear to destroy what I had before advanced upon different Occasions? What Wonder, if seeing you ready to fall into an Error, I should have pushed too far these Truths, which, if weakly expressed, would not perhaps have reclaimed you? In short, what Wonder, if having interested myself in the Happiness of a Friend, the Desire of serving her should

some-

sometimes diminish my Sincerity ——— ? But I think I am too good-humoured, to answer seriously to those ill-natur'd Reflections which you throw upon me. Ought not I to observe at first Sight, that there is more Malice in your Letter, than a real Desire of criticising? But I assure you, this shall be the last time you shall abuse my Good-nature. I am going to ease my Mind for this perfidious Usage with ———; I mean a certain Person who is not so wicked as you.

What a Pity it is that you are not a Woman! I should take great Pleasure in wrangling with you about the new Head-dresses. I never saw any thing so extravagant as the Height of them. But I dare say you think, that if the President's Widow has not one of them immediately, you cannot with Decency remain longer attached to her.

LETTER LI.

THE Affair then is determined. You still continue to extol the President's Widow, notwithstanding all that I have said. She has sacrificed to you a Rival whom she loved, and you triumph. How ready your Vanity is to turn every thing to its own Advantage? I should laugh very heartily, if your pretended Triumph should terminate in her giving you your Leave some Morning or other; for it is not at all improbable, that the Sacrifice which you boast so much of at present, was only a Feint. For all so long a Time as you have lived among the Women, you have not yet it seems laid it down as a Principle, always to distrust the Passions they affect. But if this Lady had admitted your Addresses, only to have awakened in the Heart of her *Celadon* a Love which began to grow languid; if you was only the Instrument of Jealousy in the one, and of Artifice in the other; where would be the Wonder? The President's Widow, you will tell me, has very little Cunning, and

con-

consequently is incapable of putting such a Trick upon you. My dear Marquis, Love is a great Master, and the dullest Persons in all other Respects, have very frequently a more subtle, just, and certain Discernment than others, in things that regard their Hearts. But let us leave off this Argument, and consider Men in general in the Situation in which you find yourself.

They believe, like you, that the Sacrifice which is made to them of a Rival, supposes their Superiority over him; but how often does it happen, that this Sacrifice is only an Imposition? If it be real, either your Mistress has loved this Rival, or she has not loved him. If she has loved him, her leaving him is a certain Token that she loves him no more; and in this Case, what Glory is there in such a Preference? And if she did not love him, what Honour have you from that pretended Victory which you gain over a Man who was indifferent to her?

There is still another Case where you may be preferred, and where, nevertheless, this Preference ought to flatter your Vanity no more than the other; and that is, when the

Vanity

Vanity of the Lady to whom you make your Addressee, is stronger than her Passion for the disgraced Lover. Your Rank, Figure, Reputation and Fortune may determine her in your Favour. It is even rare (I speak it to the Shame of the Women, and the Men are no less foolish in this respect) it is rare, I say, that a Lover, who has nothing but his Love and high Sentiments to offer to his Mistress, can hold out long against a Man who is distinguished by his Quality, or his Station, who has a Number of Servants, a Livery, an Equipage, &c. Whenever the most tender Lover can make a Woman blush; whenever she dares not own his Rival, and even make a Merit of sacrificing him, I prognosticate, that his Reign will not be lasting. She will only be puzzled to choose some good Reasons, out of the many which she will have to leave him. Besides, the deceased President was a Counsellor, and without doubt as old-fashioned, and as formal as his Peruke. What Figure could he make against a Man of the Court, and a Warrior such as you?

Well

Well, Sir, will you believe my Prophecies another time? Did not I tell you how it would be? Has the Chevalier found it such a difficult Matter to persuade your *Penelope*? This disconsolate Woman, who was ready to stab herself to the Heart, in less than a Fortnight has found a Successor, loves him, tries him, and is despised by him? What do you think of all this?

LETTER LII.

YES, Sir, it is owing to my Friendship and Advice, that the Countess owes that Tranquillity which she begins to enjoy; and I cannot conceive how her Indifference towards you should give you so much Vexation. I am far then from having any Inclination to pity you, seeing your Pain only proceeds from a mortified Vanity. You Men are very unjust; you want a Woman to look upon you always as Objects very dear to her, while upon leaving her, you commonly do all that is in your Power to convince her that you disdain her. Pray tell me what Advantage is it to you, the Hatred

or

or Love of a Person whom you have no longer any Regard for? Your Jealousy of the little Duke is so very unreasonable, that I could not keep from laughing very heartily at it. Is it not quite natural for a Woman to support herself upon losing you, by listening to a Man, who is more sensible than you of the Value of her Heart? And what Right, I pray you, have you to complain of it? Examine your Conscience, and own, that *Madam de Sevigné* is in the right: Your Heart is mad, my dear Marquis.

But in spite of all this, the Resolution you propose to me appears pleasant enough. I imagine there might be some Diversion in assisting you in your Scheme of Revenge against your faithless Mistress. And if it was only out of Spite, and for the Oddity of the thing, we ought to be in Love with one another. But these Drolleries commonly turn out very indifferently. Love is a little Rogue, who scratches you, when you only want to play with him. Wherefore I advise you, Sir, still to preserve your Heart; for I should scruple to deprive Commerce of so precious a Jewel. Besides, I am so tired
of

of the Insipidities of the Men, that for the future I will have nothing to do with any but Friends. One is always concerned at parting with a Lover, and I begin to be sensible of the Value of Repose, and want to enjoy it. However, I return to the Subject once more. It would be diverting enough, if you should take it into your Head that you wanted to be consoled, and that my Case was the same; because the Marquis de — is set out for his Embassy. I assure you, you are mistaken; my Friends are sufficient for me, and if you desire to remain of that Number, do not trouble me with any more Love Speeches, otherwise ——— Adieu, Sir.

L E T.

LETTER LIII.

I Do assure you I shall break off all Correspondence with you for the future, if you persist in talking to me after this manner. What Dæmon could put it in your Head to want to fill up the Place of the absent —? How could you tear one to Pieces as you did last Evening? I do not know in what manner you entered into your Part; but whatever Inclination I had to be displeased at your Proposal, I found it was impossible for me to be angry with you. I am at a Loss to find out where all this will end. But I am certain, that do what you can, I am determined not to love you now; and, which is worse, I never will: Yes, Sir, never! It is a very strange Affair, that you should endeavour to persuade a Woman that she is distressed, and that she stands in need of Comfort, when she assures you that there is nothing in it, and that she has no need of any thing. This is behaving downright tyrannically. For God's Sake, reflect a little on the Folly of what you are about. Tell me,

me, would it be decent that I should take Possession of my Friend's Place? That a Woman who has served you as a Mentor, and has performed the Office of a Mother to you, should pretend to that of a Mistress. Wicked Man that you are! If you have so soon quitted a Woman who is both young and handsome, how could you behave to an old Maid like me *? Perhaps you try to conquer me, in order to know if Love be the same with me in Practice, as it is in Speculation. But you need not put yourself to the Trouble of seducing me on that account; I will satisfy your Curiosity immediately as to that Affair.

You know that it is the common Failing of us all, seldom to act according to our Principles. Well, this is precisely what you would see in the Intrigue which you desire to engage in with me. All that I have said to you upon Women and Love, have not taught you the Manner in which I would

* *Madamoiselle de Lenclos* had Admirers when she was very old. See the Authors quoted in the Prefatory Epistle.

conduct myself on that Occasion: There is a great Difference between feeling and thinking, between expressing one's own Sentiments, and judging of those of others. You would find in me a great many Singularities, which, perhaps would displease you. My manner of thinking is quite different from that of other Women; you might know them all without knowing *Ninon*. And, believe me, all the Novelties which you could discover in me, would not recompence you for the Trouble you would have to please me. You are in the right to heighten the Value you put upon my Conquest; you expend too much in Hope; it is not in my Power to make you any Allowance for it. I advise you to continue in a more brilliant List. The Court offers you a thousand handsome Women, with whom you run no Risk of being tired of philosophising, and being witty, as you are with me. In the mean time I must tell you, that I should not have been sorry to have seen you To-day. I have been perfectly harrassed all this Forenoon, with a Dispute concerning the Ancients and Moderns. It frets me a little

little still, and I am almost tempted to agree with you, that I am not yet far enough upon the Decline, to occupy myself entirely with the Study of Science, and especially of the Antients. If you could but restrain yourself, and say fewer soft things to me, I should certainly prefer you to any other, to come and divert me amidst such serious Occupations. But you are so ungovernable, and wicked, that I dare hardly desire you to come and sup with me To-morrow. I am wrong when I say To-morrow; for it is now Two o'Clock in the Morning, and I reflect that you will not receive my Letter till Noon, and therefore it is this Evening that I shall expect you. Will you complain of me now? There is a formal Assignment for you. But let this Frankness convince you that I am not afraid of you, and that I shall believe no more of your Love-Speeches than I think proper. You will not be able to impose upon me in this respect. I know the Men so well —— !

N

L E T -

LETTER LIV.

I Must no longer dissemble with you, Sir, the real Sentiments of the Countess with regard to you. As long as I could keep her Secret, without betraying the Friendship which I had for you, I did it; but was I to conceal what I am now going to inform you of, you might possibly some time or other reproach me justly for it. Whatever Treachery you have been guilty of, whatever Pains have been taken to persuade you that you was totally forgot, still she has never ceased to love you very tenderly. Tho' she has attempted to punish you by an affected Indifference, yet she would not deprive herself of the Pleasure of seeing you: and it was out of Complaisance to her, that I picked some Quarrels with you, in order that you might come the more frequently to visit me. But all these Resources have not been able to satisfy a Heart deeply wounded; and she is on the Point of executing a Design which I have a long while opposed. You will be informed

informed of it by the following Letter, which she wrote to me Yesterday.

Letter from the Countess to Mademoiselle de Lenclos.

“ If you chuse, my dear *Ninon*, to remain
 “ my Friend, cease, I intreat you, to op-
 “ pose my Resolution. You know that it
 “ is neither the Effect of a momentary Dis-
 “ gust, nor of an imprudent Malice, nor
 “ of Despair. I have not in the least con-
 “ cealed it from you. The Possession of the
 “ Heart of the Marquis *de Sevigné* would
 “ have constituted my supreme Happiness,
 “ if I could have flattered myself with fix-
 “ ing it for ever. I was very certain of
 “ losing it, had I granted him those Favours
 “ he required of me; and his Inconstancy
 “ has convinced me, that the contrary
 “ Conduct is not a certain Means of pre-
 “ serving a Lover. I am therefore resolved
 “ to renounce Love for ever, since the Men
 “ are incapable of having a Connection with
 “ a Woman, more tender, tho’ as pure, as
 “ that of simple Friendship.

“ You know very well, that I am not yet
“ sufficiently cured, not to be uneasy every
“ time I see the Marquis. Flight is the
“ only Remedy for this Evil, and it is that
“ which I will make use of. I am not at
“ all afraid of what the World will say con-
“ cerning my Retirement into the Country.
“ I have prevented those who might pos-
“ sibly have been surpris'd at it. They
“ know that I have just gained a conside-
“ rable Law-suit against my Husband's
“ Heirs. I have therefore given it out,
“ that I am going to take Possession of the
“ Estate of —, which they disputed with
“ me. I will then deprive the Public of
“ the malicious Satisfaction of putting their
“ own Construction upon my Taste for So-
“ litude, and the Marquis of any Suspicion
“ that he has the least hand in it. I have
“ sent you his Picture, and Letters. Great
“ God, what a weak Woman am I ! Ought
“ my Heart to have such a Struggle to wean
“ itself from an Enjoyment so fatal to my
“ Repose. But the thing is determin'd,
“ and my Resolution can change no more.
“ Sympathize with me in the mean time,
“ and

“ and remember, my dear Friend, what you
 “ promised me, to inform him that I am
 “ perfectly indifferent about him. Who-
 “ ever breaks off in a Passion, shews Re-
 “ sentment and Concern for being obliged
 “ to it. ’Tis no other than to say, that
 “ they only want to be appeased; and as
 “ I have no Inclination to renew my Ac-
 “ quaintance with the Marquis, return to
 “ him what I herewith send you; but, ac-
 “ cording to our Agreement, engage him
 “ by all means to make me the same Resti-
 “ tution. You may tell him, that the Care
 “ of my Affairs obliges me to leave *Paris*
 “ for some time; but never mention me
 “ first to him.

“ It would break my Heart to leave you,
 “ my dear *Ninon*, if I did not hope to meet
 “ with you again in my Retirement. You
 “ are very good-natur’d in writing to your
 “ Friends; and if you judge of them ac-
 “ cording to the Love and Regard they
 “ have for you, there is none of them more
 “ worthy of that Title than myself. I ex-
 “ pect therefore you will write to me con-
 “ stantly, till you come to see me. You

"are very sensible of the Love I have for
"you."

I have no Advice to give you upon what
you have read. The only Favour I expect
of you is, never to expose the Indiscretion
I have committed, and for which the Coun-
tess would very justly never forgive me. All
that I can say to justify myself in my own
Eyes is, that you have loved her too much
to be absolutely indifferent about her Reso-
lution; and if I guess right, I should have
betrayed both your Interests in concealing it
from you.

LET-

LETTER LV.

I AM in Raptures at every thing you have done, and you are a charming Man. Make no doubt of it, that your Behaviour, my Importunities, and especially Love, will overcome the Resistance of the Countess. Every thing ought to determine her to embrace the Offer which you make her of your Hand. I could even take upon me henceforth to assure you, that her Pride alone resists our Efforts, and her own Inclination. I pushed her briskly this Morning to determine in your Favour. Her last Resource was the Fear of new Revolts on your Part. Take Courage, said I to her; a Proof that the Marquis will continue faithful to you is, that he is undeceived with regard to other Women, on comparing them to her whom he had deserted. Men of Honour have only a certain Number of Trespases which they can allow themselves in. The Marquis has committed those which his Age and Rank seem to justify. He has indulged himself in them at a Time when they were pardonable.

He

He has gone thro' all the Follies of the Age, and thereby he has paid the Tribute to the Fashion. He may therefore for the future be reasonable with Impunity. He can hardly indeed appear amorous of his Wife; but that is a Weakness which People will excuse in him after having seen you. You then risk nothing, Madam; for you yourself have put on the Airs of a gay Lady. You had too good Sense at the Bottom, not to grow soon weary of such a Character; you therefore have thrown it off, and the Marquis imitates you. I advise you then to forget all those Sallies. Would you wish to reproach yourself with the Death of so amiable a Man? Such a Crime as this would call aloud for Vengeance.

In a word, I have prayed and intreated her, and yet she is still unresolved; but I do not doubt you will soon get the better of a Resistance, which, probably, she finds already extremely uneasy to her.

Well, Sir, if the Hurry which all this occasions, will allow you Leisure to examine what I said to you some Time ago, will you not be tempted to think me still in Contradiction

diction with myself? I advised you at first to treat Love a little Cavalierly, and to dip no further in it than just for Amusement; and that you ought to have no Attachment with the Fair Sex, but such as was easily broke off. But at that time I spoke to you only in general Terms, and with relation to the Regard you ought to have for ordinary Women. Was it possible for me then to foresee, that you would be so happy as to meet with one who, like the Countess, should unite to all the Charms of her Sex, all the Qualities of the Man of Honour? How great must be your Happiness! You are going to possess, in the same Person, the most valuable Friend, and the most charming Mistress. Be so good as to admit me to a third Share in your Friendship, and then my Happiness shall equal yours; for can we ever enjoy more complete Happiness, than when we partake in that of our Friends?

F I N I S.

